

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Sonnets from the Portuguese and Other Poems



SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE
AND OTHER POEMS

AND OTHER POEMS

THE DOLPHIN EDITION INCLUDES THE POEMS THAT AP-
PEARED IN THE FIRST EDITION OF POEMS BY ELIZ-
ABETH BARNETT AND THE ADDITIONAL POEMS THAT
WERE ADDED TO THE 1890 EDITION. Mrs. Browning's
translations of "Pamphylus Bound" and "Lament for
Achilles" which also appeared in 1890 are not in-
cluded.

Published by
The Dolphin & Company, Inc.
New York City, New York

NOTE ON THE EDITION

This Dolphin edition includes the poems that appeared in the 1844 edition of POEMS, BY ELIZABETH BARRETT, and the additional poems that were added to the 1850 edition. Mrs. Browning's translations of "Prometheus Bound" and "Lament for Adonis," which also appeared in 1850, are not included.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

AND OTHER POEMS

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING



Dolphin Books
Doubleday & Company, Inc.
Garden City, New York

SONNETS FROM THE
PORTUGUESE

AND OTHER POEMS

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Printed in the United States of America

Graham & Company, Inc.
London, E.C. 4, New York

CONTENTS

POEMS, 1844

Adequacy	85	Look, The	80
An Apprehension	83	Lost Bower, The	206
Bertha in the Lane	261	Loved Once	271
Catarina to Camoens	285	Meaning of the Look, The	81
Cheerfulness Taught by Reason	84	Mourning Mother, The	118
Child Asleep, A	221	Pain in Pleasure	82
Comfort	78	Past and Future	75
Crowned and Buried	231	Patience Taught by Nature	84
Crowned and Wedded	229	Perplexed Music	78
Cry of the Children, The	223	Poet and the Bird, The	205
Cry of the Human, The	250	Portrait, A	290
Dead Pan, The	306	Prisoner, The	87
Discontent	83	Rhapsody of Life's Progress, A	273
Drama of Exile, A	9	Rhyme of the Duchess May	181
Exaggeration	85	Romance of the Swan's Nest, The	301
Flower in a Letter, A	246	Romaunt of the Page, The	88
Flush, My Dog, To	237	Seraph and Poet, The	74
Fourfold Aspect, The	242	Sleeping and Watching	292
Futurity	79	Soul's Expression, The	74
George Sand, To		Substitution	77
A Desire	86	Tears	76
A Recognition	86	That Day	270
Grief	77	Thought for a Lonely Death-bed, A	81
House of Clouds, The	281	Two Sayings, The	80
Insufficiency	87	Valediction, A	120
Irreparableness	76	Vision of Poets, A	147
Lady Geraldine's Courtship	122	Wine of Cyprus	294
Lady's 'Yes,' The	204	Wordsworth, On a Portrait of, by B. R. Haydon	75
Lay of the Brown Rosary, The	100	Work	79
Lay of the Early Rose, A	254	Work and Contemplation	82
L. E. L.'s Last Question	279		
Lessons from the Gorse	305		

POEMS, 1850

Calls on the Heart	348	Insufficiency	377
Change Upon Change	365	Life	336
Child's Grave at Florence,		Life and Love	371
A	366	Love	336
Child's Thought of God, A	356	Man's Requirements, A	361
Claim, The	357	Mask, The	346
Confessions	339	Mountaineer and Poet	334
Dead Rose, A	358	Poet, The	335
Denial, A	371	Proof and Disproof	373
Finite and Infinite	333	Prospect, The	337
Flush or Faunus	332	Question and Answer	375
Heaven and Earth	337	Reed, A	365
Hector in the Garden	328	Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's	
Hiram Powers' 'Greek Slave'	335	Point, The	319
Hugh Stuart Boyd		Sabbath Morning at Sea, A	343
His Blindness	338	Two Sketches	333
His Death, 1848	338	Wisdom Unapplied	351
Legacies	339	Woman's Shortcomings, A	360
Human Life's Mystery	354	Year's Spinning, A	363
Inclusions	376		

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE 379

POEMS

1844

A DRAMA OF EXILE

'De patrie, et de Dieu, des poètes, de l'âme
Qui s'élève en priant.'

—*Victor Hugo.*

PERSONS

CHRIST, *in a Vision.*

ADAM.

EVE.

GABRIEL.

LUCIFER.

ANGELS, EDEN SPIRITS, EARTH SPIRITS,
AND PHANTASMS.

SCENE.—*The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with cloud, from the depth of which revolves a sword of fire self-moved. ADAM and EVE are seen in the distance flying along the glare.*

LUCIFER, *alone.*

Rejoice in the clefts of Gehenna,
My exiled, my host!
Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a
Heaven's empire was lost.
Through the seams of her shaken foundations,
Smoke up in great joy!
With the smoke of your fierce exultations
Deform and destroy!
Smoke up with your lurid revenges,
And darken the face
Of the white heavens and taunt them with changes
From glory and grace.
We, in falling, while destiny strangles,

Pull down with us all.

Let them look to the rest of their angels!

Who 's safe from a fall?

He saves not. Where 's Adam? Can pardon

Requicken that sod?

Unkinged is the King of the Garden,

The image of God.

Other exiles are cast out of Eden,—

More curse has been hurled:

Come up, O my locusts, and feed in

The green of the world!

Come up! we have conquered by evil;

Good reigns not alone:

I prevail now, and, angel or devil,

Inherit a throne.

In sudden apparition a watch of innumerable ANGELS, rank above rank, slopes up from around the gate to the zenith.

The ANGEL GABRIEL descends.

LUCIFER. Hail, Gabriel, the keeper of the gate!

Now that the fruit is plucked, prince Gabriel,

I hold that Eden is impregnable

Under thy keeping.

GABRIEL. Angel of the sin,

Such as thou standest,—pale in the drear light

Which rounds the rebel's work with Maker's wrath,—

Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls,

A monumental melancholy gloom

Seen down all ages, whence to mark despair

And measure out the distances from good.

Go from us straightway!

LUCIFER. Wherefore?

GABRIEL. Lucifer,

Thy last step in this place trod sorrow up.

Recoil before that sorrow, if not this sword.

LUCIFER. Angels are in the world—wherefore not I?

Exiles are in the world—wherefore not I?

The cursed are in the world—wherefore not I?

GABRIEL. Depart!

LUCIFER. And where 's the logic of 'depart'?

Our lady Eve had half been satisfied

To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt
 To fix my postulate better. Dost thou dream
 Of guarding some monopoly in heaven
 Instead of earth? Why, I can dream with thee
 To the length of thy wings.

GABRIEL.

I do not dream.

This is not heaven, even in a dream, nor earth,
 As earth was once, first breathed among the stars,
 Articulate glory from the mouth divine,
 To which the myriad spheres thrilled audibly,
 Touched like a lute-string, and the sons of God
 Said AMEN, singing it. I know that this
 Is earth not new created but new cursed—
 This, Eden's gate not opened but built up
 With a final cloud of sunset. Do I dream?
 Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost
 By Lucifer the serpent; this the sword
 (This sword alive with justice and with fire)
 That smote, upon the forehead, Lucifer
 The angel. Wherefore, angel, go—depart!
 Enough is sinned and suffered.

LUCIFER.

By no means.

Here 's a brave earth to sin and suffer on:
 It holds fast still—it cracks not under curse;
 It holds like mine immortal. Presently
 We 'll sow it thick enough with graves as green
 Or greener certes, than its knowledge-tree.
 We 'll have the cypress for the tree of life,
 More eminent for shadow: for the rest,
 We 'll build it dark with towns and pyramids,
 And temples, if it please you:—we 'll have feasts
 And funerals also, merrymakes and wars,
 Till blood and wine shall mix and run along
 Right o'er the edges. And, good Gabriel
 (Ye like that word in heaven), I too have strength—
 Strength to behold Him and not worship Him,
 Strength to fall from Him and not cry on Him,
 Strength to be in the universe and yet
 Neither God nor his servant. The red sign
 Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt me with,

Is God's sign that it bows not unto God,
The potter's mark upon his work, to show
It rings well to the striker. I and the earth
Can bear more curse.

GABRIEL. O miserable earth,

O ruined angel!

LUCIFER. Well, and if it be!

I CHOSE this ruin; I elected it
Of my will, not of service. What I do,
I do volitent, not obedient,
And overtop thy crown with my despair.
My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back to heaven,
And leave me to the earth, which is mine own
In virtue of her ruin, as I hers
In virtue of my revolt! Turn thou from both
That bright, impassive, passive angelhood,
And spare to read us backward any more
Of the spent hallelujahs!

GABRIEL. Spirit of scorn,

I might say, of unreason! I might say,
That who despairs, acts; that who acts, connives
With God's relations set in time and space;
That who elects, assumes a something good
Which God made possible; that who lives, obeys
The law of a Life-maker . . .

LUCIFER. Let it pass!

No more, thou Gabriell! What if I stand up
And strike my brow against the crystalline
Roofing the creatures,—shall I say, for that,
My stature is too high for me to stand,—
Henceforward I must sit? Sit *thou*!

GABRIEL. I kneel.

LUCIFER. A heavenly answer. Get thee to thy heaven,
And leave my earth to me!

GABRIEL. Through heaven and earth
God's will moves freely, and I follow it,
As color follows light. He overflows
The firmamental walls with deity,
Therefore with love; his lightnings go abroad,

His pity may do so, his angels must,
Whene'er He gives them charges.

LUCIFER.

Verily,

I and my demons, who are spirits of scorn,
Might hold this charge of standing with a sword
'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well
As the benignest angel of you all.

GABRIEL. Thou speakest in the shadow of thy change.

If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God
This morning for a moment, thou hadst known
That only pity fitly can chastise:
Hate but avenges.

LUCIFER.

As it is, I know

Something of pity. When I reeled in heaven,
And my sword grew too heavy for my grasp,
Stabbing through matter, which it could not pierce
So much as the first shell of,—toward the throne;
When I fell back, down,—staring up as I fell,—
The lightnings holding open my scathed lids,
And that thought of the infinite of God,
Hurled after to precipitate descent;
When countless angel faces still and stern
Pressed out upon me from the level heavens
Adown the abysmal spaces, and I fell
Trampled down by your stillness, and struck blind
By the sight within your eyes,—'t was then I knew
How ye could pity, my kind angelhood!

GABRIEL. Alas, discrowned one, by the truth in me

Which God keeps in me, I would give away
All—save that truth and his love keeping it—
To lead thee home again into the light
And hear thy voice chant with the morning stars,
When their rays tremble round them with much song
Sung in more gladness!

LUCIFER.

Sing, my Morning Star!

Last beautiful, last heavenly, that I loved!
If I could drench thy golden locks with tears,
What were it to this angel?

GABRIEL.

What love is.

And now I have named God.

LUCIFER.

Yet, Gabriel,

By the lie in me which I keep myself,
 Thou 'rt a false swearer. Were it otherwise,
 What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender thoughts
 To that earth-angel or earth-demon—which,
 Thou and I have not solved the problem yet
 Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam there,—
 That red-clay and a breath,—who must, forsooth,
 Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
 With beauty and music waving in his trees
 And running in his rivers, to make glad
 His soul made perfect?—is it not for hope,
 A hope within thee deeper than thy truth,
 Of finally conducting him and his
 To fill the vacant thrones of me and mine,
 Which affront heaven with their vacuity?

GABRIEL. Angel, there are no vacant thrones in heaven

To suit thy empty words. Glory and life
 Fulfil their own depletions; and if God
 Sighed you far from Him, his next breath drew in
 A compensative splendor up the vast,
 Flushing the starry arteries.

LUCIFER.

What a changel

So, let the vacant thrones and gardens too
 Fill as may please you!—and be pitiful,
 As ye translate that word, to the dethroned
 And exiled, man or angel. The fact stands,
 That I, the rebel, the cast out and down,
 Am here and will not go; while there, along
 The light to which ye flash the desert out,
 Flies your adopted Adam, your red-clay
 In two kinds, both being flawed. Why, what is this?
 Whose work is this? Whose hand was in the work?
 Against whose hand? In this last strife, methinks,
 I am not a fallen angel!

GABRIEL.

Dost thou know

Aught of those exiles?

LUCIFER.

Ay: I know they have fled

Silent all day along the wilderness:

I know they wear, for burden on their backs,

The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,
 And faces of the marshalled cherubim
 Shining against, not for them; and I know
 They dare not look in one another's face,—
 As if each were a cherub!

GABRIEL. Dost thou know
 Aught of their future?

LUCIFER. Only as much as this:
 That evil will increase and multiply
 Without a benediction.

GABRIEL. Nothing more?

LUCIFER. Why so the angels taunt!
 What should be more?

GABRIEL. God is more.

LUCIFER. Proving what?

GABRIEL. That he is God,
 And capable of saving. Lucifer,
 I charge thee by the solitude He kept
 Ere He created,—leave the earth to God!

LUCIFER. My foot is on the earth, firm as my sin.

GABRIEL. I charge thee by the memory of heaven
 Ere any sin was done,—leave earth to God!

LUCIFER. My sin is on the earth, to reign thereon.

GABRIEL. I charge thee by the choral song we sang,
 When up against the white shore of our feet
 The depths of the creation swelled and brake,—
 And the new worlds, the beaded foam and flower
 Of all that coil, roared outward into space
 On thunder-edges,—leave the earth to God!

LUCIFER. My woe is on the earth, to curse thereby.

GABRIEL. I charge thee by that mournful Morning Star
 Which trembles . . .

LUCIFER. Enough spoken. As the pine
 In norland forest drops its weight of snows
 By a night's growth, so, growing toward my ends
 I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriell!
 Watch out thy service; I achieve my will.
 And peradventure in the after years,
 When thoughtful men shall bend their spacious brows
 Upon the storm and strife seen everywhere

To ruffle their smooth manhood and break up
 With lurid lights of intermittent hope
 Their human fear and wrong,—they may discern
 The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS

*(Chanting from Paradise, while ADAM and EVE fly across
 the Sword-glare.)*

Hearken, oh hearken! let your souls behind you
 Turn, gently moved!

Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,
 O lost, beloved!

Through the thick-shielded and strong-marshalled angels,
 They press and pierce:

Our requiems follow fast on our evangels,—
 Voice throbs in verse.

We are but orphaned spirits left in Eden
 A time ago:

God gave us golden cups, and we were bidden
 To feed you so.

But now our right hand hath no cup remaining,
 No work to do,

The mystic hydromel is spilt, and staining
 The whole earth through.

Most ineradicable stains, for showing
 (Not interfused!)

That brighter colors were the world's foregoing,
 Than shall be used.

Hearken, oh hearken! ye shall hearken surely
 For years and years,

The noise beside you, dripping coldly, purely,
 Of spirits' tears.

The yearning to a beautiful denied you
 Shall strain your powers;

Ideal sweetnesses shall overglide you,
 Resumed from ours.

In all your music, our pathetic minor
 Your ears shall cross;

And all good gifts shall mind you of diviner,
 With sense of loss.
 We shall be near you in your poet-languors
 And wild extremes,
 What time ye vex the desert with vain angers,
 Or mock with dreams.
 And when upon you, weary after roaming,
 Death's seal is put,
 By the foregone ye shall discern the coming,
 Through eyelids shut.

SPIRITS OF THE TREES.

Hark! the Eden trees are stirring,
 Soft and solemn in your hearing!
 Oak and linden, palm and fir,
 Tamarisk and juniper,
 Each still throbbing in vibration
 Since that crowning of creation
 When the God-breath spake abroad,
Let us make man like to God!
 And the pine stood quivering
 As the awful word went by,
 Like a vibrant music-string
 Stretched from mountain-peak to sky;
 And the platan did expand
 Slow and gradual, branch and head;
 And the cedar's strong black shade
 Fluttered brokenly and grand:
 Grove and wood were swept aslant
 In emotion jubilant.

VOICE OF THE SAME, *but softer.*

Which divine impulsion cleaves
 In dim movements to the leaves
 Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted,
 In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
 In the sunlight and the moonlight
 Greenly sifted through the trees.
 Ever wave the Eden trees
 In the nightlight and the noonlight,
 With a ruffling of green branches

Shaded off to resonances,
 Never stirred by rain or breeze.
 Fare ye well, farewell!
 The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some murmur which ye heard before.
 Farewell! the trees of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

RIVER SPIRITS.

Hark! the flow of the four rivers—
 Hark the flow!
 How the silence round you shivers,
 While our voices through it go,
 Cold and clear.

A SOFTER VOICE.

Think a little, while ye hear,
 Of the banks
 Where the willows and the deer
 Crowd in intermingled ranks,
 As if all would drink at once
 Where the living water runs!—
 Of the fishes' golden edges
 Flashing in and out the sedges;
 Of the swans on silver thrones,
 Floating down the winding streams
 With impassive eyes turned shoreward
 And a chant of undertones,—
 And the lotos leaning forward
 To help them into dreams!
 Fare ye well, farewell!
 The river-sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door.
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some murmur which ye heard before.
 Farewell! the streams of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

BIRD SPIRIT.

I am the nearest nightingale
 That singeth in Eden after you;

And I am singing loud and true,
And sweet,—I do not fail.

I sit upon a cypress bough,
Close to the gate, and I fling my song
Over the gate and through the mail
Of the warden angels marshalled strong,—
Over the gate and after you.

And the warden angels let it pass,
Because the poor brown bird, alas,
Sings in the garden, sweet and true.
And I build my song of high pure notes,
Note over note, height over height,
Till I strike the arch of the Infinite,
And I bridge abysmal agonies
With strong, clear calms of harmonies,—
And something abides, and something floats,
In the song which I sing after you.

Fare ye well, farewell!

The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some cadence which ye heard before.
Farewell! the birds of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

FLOWER SPIRITS.

We linger, we linger,
The last of the throng,
Like the tones of a singer
Who loves his own song.

We are spirit-aromas
Of blossom and bloom.

We call your thoughts home,—as
Ye breathe our perfume,—

To the amaranth's splendor
Afire on the slopes;

To the lily-bells tender,
And gray heliotropes;

To the poppy-plains keeping
Such dream-breath and blee

That the angels there stepping
 Grew whiter to see:
 To the nook, set with moly,
 Ye jested one day in,
 Till your smile waxed too holy
 And left your lips praying:
 To the rose in the bower-place,
 That dripped o'er you sleeping;
 To the asphodel flower-place,
 Ye walked ankle-deep in.
 We pluck at your raiment,
 We stroke down your hair,
 We faint in our lament
 And pine into air.
 Fare ye well, farewell!
 The Eden scents, no longer sensible,
 Expire at Eden's door.
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some fragrance which ye knew before.
 Farewell! the flowers of Eden
 Ye shall smell nevermore.

*There is silence. ADAM and EVE fly on, and never look back.
 Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark ANGEL passing
 quickly, is cast upon the Sword-glare.*

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

ADAM. Pausing a moment on this outer edge
 Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in light
 The dark exterior desert,—hast thou strength,
 Beloved, to look behind us to the gate?

EVE. Have I not strength to look up to thy face?

ADAM. We need be strong: yon spectacle of cloud
 Which seals the gate up to the final doom,
 Is God's seal manifest. There seem to lie
 A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead;
 The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless;
 And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword
 Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire
 From side to side, in pendulous horror slow,

Across the stagnant ghastly glare thrown flat
 On the intermediate ground from that to this.
 The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,
 Thrones, dominations, pryncedoms, rank on rank,
 Rising sublimely to the feet of God,
 On either side and overhead the gate,
 Show like a glittering and sustained smoke
 Drawn to an apex. That their faces shine
 Betwixt the solemn clasping of their wings
 Clapsed high to a silver point above their heads,—
 We only guess from hence, and not discern.

EVE. Though we were near enough to see them shine,
 The shadow on thy face were awfuller,
 To me, at least,—to me—than all their light.

ADAM. What is this, Eve? thou droppest heavily
 In a heap earthward, and thy body heaves
 Under the golden floodings of thine hair!

EVE. O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve—
 Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me little now,
 Seeing that I now confess myself thy death
 And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—
 I do adjure thee, put me straight away,
 Together with my name! Sweet, punish me!
 O Love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond
 The light cast outward by the fiery sword,
 Into the dark which earth must be to us,
 Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the curse said
 My seed shall the first tempter's! strike with curse,
 As God struck in the garden! and as HE,
 Being satisfied with justice and with wrath,
 Did roll his thunder gentler at the close,—
 Thou, peradventure, mayst at last recoil
 To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my lord!
 I, also, after tempting, writhe on the ground,
 And I would feed on ashes from thine hand,
 As suits me, O my tempted!

ADAM. My beloved,
 Mine Eve and life—I have no other name
 For thee or for the sun than what ye are,
 My utter life and light! If we have fallen,

It is that we have sinned,—we: God is just;
 And, since his curse doth comprehend us both,
 It must be that his balance holds the weights
 Of first and last sin on a level. What!
 Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight
 Among the hills of Eden, here assume
 To mend the justice of the perfect God,
 By piling up a curse upon his curse,
 Against thee—thee?

EVE. For so, perchance, thy God
 Might take thee into grace for scorning me;
 Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof
 Of inward abrogation of the sin:
 And so, the blessèd angels might come down
 And walk with thee as erst,—I think they would,—
 Because I was not near to make them sad
 Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

ADAM. They know me. I am deepest in the guilt,
 If last in the transgression.

EVE. Thou!

ADAM. If God,
 Who gave the right and joyaunce of the world
 Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to me,
 The best gift last, the last sin was the worst,
 Which sinned against more complement of gifts
 And grace of giving. God! I render back
 Strong benediction and perpetual praise
 From mortal feeble lips (as incense-smoke,
 Out of a little censer, may fill heaven),
 That thou, in striking my benumbèd hands
 And forcing them to drop all other boons
 Of beauty and dominion and delight,—
 Hast left this well-belovèd Eve, this life
 Within life, this best gift between their palms,
 In gracious compensation!

EVE. Is it thy voice?
 Or some saluting angel's—calling home
 My feet into the garden?

ADAM. O my God!
 I, standing here between the glory and dark,—

The glory of thy wrath projected forth
 From Eden's wall, the dark of our distress
 Which settles a step off in that drear world—
 Lift up to Thee the hands from whence hath fallen
 Only creation's sceptre,—thanking Thee
 That rather Thou hast cast me out with *her*
 Than left me lorn of her in Paradise,
 With angel looks and angel songs around
 To show the absence of her eyes and voice,
 And make society full desertness
 Without her use in comfort!

EVE. Where is loss?

Am I in Eden? can another speak
 Mine own love's tongue?

ADAM. Because with *her*, I stand

Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
 And look away from heaven which doth accuse,
 And look away from earth which doth convict,
 Into her face, and crown my discrowned brow
 Out of her love, and put the thought of her
 Around me, for an Eden full of birds,
 And lift her body up—thus—to my heart,
 And with my lips upon her lips,—thus, thus,—
 Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath
 Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides
 But overtops this grief.

EVE. I am renewed.

My eyes grow with the light which is in thine;
 The silence of my heart is full of sound.
 Hold me up—so! Because I comprehend
 This human love, I shall not be afraid
 Of any human death; and yet because
 I know this strength of love, I seem to know
 Death's strength by that same sign. Kiss on my lips,
 To shut the door close on my rising soul,—
 Lest it pass outwards in astonishment
 And leave thee lonely!

ADAM. Yet thou liest, Eve,

Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,
 Thy face flat to the sky.

EVE.

Ay, and the tears

Running, as it might seem, my life from me,
 They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,
 And weep so, as if in a dream or prayer,
 Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard tight thought
 Which clipped my heart and showed me evermore
 Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,
 And as the pure ones loathe our sin. To-day,
 All day, belovèd, as we fled across
 This desolating radiance cast by swords
 Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless to myself,
 Striking against each other—‘O Lord God!’
 (’T was so I prayed) ‘I ask Thee by my sin,
 And by thy curse, and by thy blameless heavens,
 Make dreadful haste to hide me from thy face
 And from the face of my belovèd here
 For whom I am no helpmeet, quick away
 Into the new dark mystery of death!
 I will lie still there, I will make no plaint,
 I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word,
 Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun
 Where peradventure I might sin anew
 Against thy mercy and his pleasure Death,
 O death, whate’er it be, is good enough
 For such as I am: while for Adam here,
 No voice shall say again, in heaven or earth,
It is not good for him to be alone.’

ADAM. And was it good for such a prayer to pass,
 My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives?
 If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

EVE. ’T was an ill prayer: it shall be prayed no more;
 And God did use it like a foolishness,
 Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown
 Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer;
 Love makes it strong: and since I was the first
 In the transgression, with a steady foot
 I will be first to tread from this sword-glare
 Into the outer darkness of the waste,—
 And thus I do it.

ADAM.

Thus I follow thee,

As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds! what sounds!
 I feel a music which comes straight from heaven,
 As tender as a watering dew.

EVE.

I think

That angels—not those guarding Paradise,—
 But the love-angels, who came erst to us,
 And when we said ‘God,’ fainted unawares
 Back from our mortal presence unto God,
 (As if He drew them inward in a breath)
 His name being heard of them,—I think that they
 With sliding voices lean from heavenly towers,
 Invisible but gracious. Hark—how soft!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS

Faint and tender.

Mortal man and woman,
 Go upon your travell
 Heaven assist the human
 Smoothly to unravel
 All that web of pain
 Wherein ye are holden.
 Do ye know our voices
 Chanting down the Golden?
 Do ye guess our choice is,
 Being un beholden,
 To be hearkened by you yet again?

This pure door of opal
 God hath shut between us,—
 Us, his shining people,
 You, who once have seen us
 And are blinded new!
 Yet, across the doorway,
 Past the silence reaching,
 Farewells evermore may,
 Blessing in the teaching,
 Glide from us to you.

FIRST SEMICHORUS.

Think how erst your Eden,
 Day on day succeeding,
 With our presence glowed.
 We came as if the Heavens were bowed
 To a milder music rare.
 Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
 Treading down the steps of cloud,
 While our wings, outspreading
 Double calms of whiteness,
 Dropped superfluous brightness
 Down from stair to stair.

SECOND SEMICHORUS.

Or oft, abrupt though tender,
 While ye gazed on space,
 We flashed our angel-splendor
 In either human face.
 With mystic lilies in our hands,
 From the atmospheric bands
 Breaking with a sudden grace,
 We took you unaware!
 While our feet struck glories
 Outward, smooth and fair,
 Which we stood on floorwise,
 Platformed in mid-air.

FIRST SEMICHORUS.

Or oft, when Heaven-descended,
 Stood we in our wondering sight
 In a mute apocalypse
 With dumb vibrations on our lips
 From hosannas ended,
 And grand half-vanishings
 Of the empyreal things
 Within our eyes belated,
 Till the heavenly Infinite
 Falling off from the Created,
 Left our inward contemplation
 Opened into ministration.

CHORUS.

Then upon our axle turning
 Of great joy to sympathy,

We sang out the morning
 Broadening up the sky.
 Or we drew
 Our music through
 The noontide's hush and heat and shine,
 Informed with our intense Divine:

Interrupted vital notes
 Palpitating hither, thither,
 Burning out into the æther,
 Sensible like fiery motes.

Or, whenever twilight drifted
 Through the cedar masses,
 The globèd sun we lifted,
 Trailing purple, trailing gold

Out between the passes
 Of the mountains manifold,
 To anthems slowly sung:
 While he,—aweary, half in swoon
 For joy to hear our climbing tune
 Transpierce the stars' concentric rings,—
 The burden of his glory flung
 In broken lights upon our wings.

The chant dies away confusedly, and LUCIFER appears.

LUCIFER. Now may all fruits be pleasant to thy lips,
 Beautiful Eve! The times have somewhat changed
 Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree,
 Albeit ye are not gods yet.

EVE. Adam! hold
 My right hand strongly! It is Lucifer—
 And we have love to lose.

ADAM. I' the name of God,
 Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!
 And leave us to the desert thou hast made
 Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-slime
 Athwart this path kept holy to our tears!
 Or we may curse thee with their bitterness.

LUCIFER. Curse freely! curses thicken. Why, this Eve
 Who thought me once part worthy of her ear
 And somewhat wiser than the other beasts,—
 Drawing together her large globes of eyes,

The light of which is throbbing in and out
Their steadfast continuity of gaze,—
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a knot,
And down from her white heights of womanhood
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should fear
To wager such an apple as she plucked
Against one riper from the tree of life,
That she could curse too—as a woman may—
Smooth in the vowels.

EVE. So—speak wickedly!
I like it best so. Let thy words be wounds,—
For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt.
Trench on the forms of good by open ill—
For, so, I shall wax strong and grand with scorn,
Scorning myself for ever trusting thee
As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust,
He could speak wisdom.

LUCIFER. Our new gods, it seems
Deal more in thunders than in courtesies.
And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which anon
I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery
From all the wandering visions of the world,
May show worse railing than our lady Eve
Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.
But why should this be? Adam pardoned Eve.

ADAM. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah pardoned both!

EVE. Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve.

LUCIFER. So, well. Yet Adam was undone of Eve,
As both were by the snake. Therefore forgive,
In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor snake—
Who stung there, not so poorly!

EVE.
Hold thy wrath,
[Aside.
Belovèd Adam! let me answer him;
For this time he speaks truth, which we should hear,
And asks for mercy, which I most should grant,
In like wise, as he tells us—in like wisel
And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,
As freely as the streams of Eden flowed
When we were happy by them. So, depart;
Leave us to walk the remnant of our time

Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek
To harm us any more or scoff at us,
Or ere the dust be laid upon our face,
To find there the communion of the dust
And issue of the dust.—Go!

ADAM. At once, go!

LUCIFER. Forgive! and go! Ye images of clay,
Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what jest is this?
What words are these to use? By what a thought
Conceive ye of me? Yesterday—a snake!
To-day—what?

ADAM. A strong spirit.

EVE. A sad spirit.

ADAM. Perhaps a fallen angel.—Who shall say!

LUCIFER. Who told thee, Adam?

ADAM. Thou! The prodigy
Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes
Which comprehend the heights of some great fall.
I think that thou hast one day worn a crown
Under the eyes of God.

LUCIFER. And why of God?

ADAM. It were no crown else. Verily, I think
Thou 'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday
Said it so surely, but I know to-day
Grief by grief, sin by sin.

LUCIFER. A crown, by a crown.

ADAM. Ay, mock me! now I know more than I knew:
Now I know that thou art fallen below hope
Of final re-ascent.

LUCIFER. Because?

ADAM. Because

A spirit who expected to see God
Though at the last point of a million years,
Could dare no mockery of a ruined man
Such as this Adam.

LUCIFER. Who is high and bold—

Be it said passing!—of a good red clay
Discovered on some top of Lebanon,
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
Of the black eagle's wing! A furlong lower

Had made a meeker king for Eden. Sohl
 Is it not possible, by sin and grief
 (To give the things your names) that spirits should rise
 Instead of falling?

ADAM. Most impossible.
 The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,
 Whoever rises must approach delight
 And sanctity in the act.

LUCIFER. Ha, my clay-king!
 Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long
 The after generations. Earth, methinks,
 Will disinherit thy philosophy
 For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs,
 And class these present dogmas with the rest
 Of the old-world traditions, Eden fruits
 And Saurian fossils.

EVE. Speak no more with him,
 Beloved! it is not good to speak with him.
 Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more!
 We have no pardon which thou dost not scorn,
 Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
 Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,
 We would be alone.—Go!

LUCIFER. Ah! ye talk the same,
 All of you—spirits and clay—go, and depart!
 In Heaven they said so, and at Eden's gate,
 And here, reiterant, in the wilderness.
 None saith, Stay with me, for thy face is fair!
 None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice is sweet!
 And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.
 Look on me, woman! Am I beautiful?

EVE. Thou hast a glorious darkness.

LUCIFER. Nothing more?

EVE. I think, no more.

LUCIFER. False Heart—thou thinkest more!
 Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,
 Unwillingly but fully, that I stand
 Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves
 Were fashioned very good at best, so *we*
 Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word

Which thrilled behind us, God himself being moved
 When that august work of a perfect shape,
 His dignities of sovran angelhood,
 Swept out into the universe,—divine
 With thunderous movements, earnest looks of gods,
 And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings.
 Whereof was I, in motion and in form,
 A part not poorest. And yet,—yet, perhaps,
 This beauty which I speak of, is not here,
 As God's voice is not here, nor even my crown—
 I do not know. What is this thought or thing
 Which I call beauty? Is it thought, or thing?
 Is it a thought accepted for a thing?
 Or both? or neither?—a pretext—a word?
 Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
 Under my own breath: my perceptions reel
 For evermore around it, and fall off,
 As if it too were holy.

EVE. Which it is.

ADAM. The essence of all beauty, I call love.

The attribute, the evidence, and end,
 The consummation to the inward sense,
 Of beauty apprehended from without,
 I still call love. As form, when colorless,
 Is nothing to the eye,—that pine-tree there,
 Without its black and green, being all a blank,—
 So, without love, is beauty undiscerned
 In man or angel. Angell rather ask
 What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,
 And what collateral love moves on with thee;
 Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

LUCIFER. Love! what is love? I lose it. Beauty and love

I darken to the image. Beauty—love!

He fades away, while a low music sounds.

ADAM. Thou art pale, Eve.

EVE. The precipice of ill

Down this colossal nature, dizzies me:

And, hark! the starry harmony remote

Seems measuring the heights from whence he fell.

ADAM. Think that we have not fallen so! By the hope
And aspiration, by the love and faith,
We do exceed the stature of this angel.

EVE. Happier we are than he is, by the death.

ADAM. Or rather, by the life of the Lord God!

How dim the angel grows, as if that blast
Of music swept him back into the dark.

The music is stronger, gathering itself into uncertain articulation.

EVE. It throbs in on us like a plaintive heart,
Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative,
Its gradual sweetness through the yielding air,
To such expression as the stars may use,
Most starry-sweet and strange! With every note
That grows more loud, the angel grows more dim,
Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

ADAM. Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER

He fades utterly away and vanishes, as it proceeds.

Mine orb'd image sinks
Back from thee, back from thee,
As thou art fallen, methinks,
Back from me, back from me.

O my light-bearer,
 Could another fairer
 Lack to thee, lack to thee?

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

I loved thee with the fiery love of stars
Who love by burning, and by loving move,
Too near the throned Jehovah not to love.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Their brows flash fast on me from gliding cars,
 Pale-passioned for my loss.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Mine orbèd heats drop cold
Down from thee, down from thee.

As fell thy grace of old

Down from me, down from me.

O my light-bearer,

Is another fairer

Won to thee, won to thee?

Ah, ah, Heosphoros,

Great love preceded loss,

Known to thee, known to thee.

Ah, ah!

Thou, breathing thy communicable grace

Of life into my light,

Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,

Hast inly fed,

And flooded me with radiance overmuch

From thy pure height.

Ah, ah!

Thou, with calm, floating pinions both ways spread,

Erect, irradiated,

Didst sting my wheel of glory

On, on before thee

Along the Godlight by a quickening touch!

Ha, ha!

Around, around the firmamental ocean

I swam expanding with delirious fire!

Around, around, around, in blind desire

To be drawn upward to the Infinite—

Ha, ha!

Until, the motion flinging out the motion

To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,

To a dim whirl of languor and delight,

I wound in gygrant orbits smooth and white

With that intense rapidity.

Around, around,

I wound and interwound,

While all the cyclic heavens about me spun.

Stars, planets, suns, and moons dilated broad,

Then flashed together into a single sun,

And wound, and wound in one:

And as they wound I wound,—around, around,

In a great fire I almost took for God.
Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks
Down from me, down from me—
My beauty falls, methinks,
Down from thee, down from thee!
O my light-bearer,
O my path-preparer,
Gone from me, gone from me!
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

I cannot kindle underneath the brow
Of this new angel here, who is not thou.
All things are altered since that time ago,—
And if I shine at eve, I shall not know.

I am strange—I am slow.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,
With tears between the looks raised up to me.

Ah, ah!

When, having wept all night, at break of day
Above the folded hills they shall survey
My light, a little trembling, in the gray.

Ah, ah!

And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,
Through all my piteous pomp at morn or even,
And melancholy leaning out of heaven,
That love, their own divine, may change or end,
That love may close in loss!
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

SCENE.—*Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.*

ADAM. How doth the wide and melancholy earth
Gather her hills around us, gray and ghast,
And stare with blank significance of loss
Right in our faces! Is the wind up?

EVE.

Nay.

ADAM. And yet the cedars and the junipers
 Rock slowly through the mist, without a sound,
 And shapes which have no certainty of shape
 Drift duskly in and out between the pines,
 And loom along the edges of the hills,
 And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—
 Shadows without a body, which contract
 And lengthen as we gaze on them.

EVE. O life
 Which is not man's nor angel's! What is this?

ADAM. No cause for fear. The circle of God's life
 Contains all life beside.

EVE. I think the earth
 Is crazed with curse, and wanders from the sense
 Of those first laws affixed to form and space
 Or ever she knew sin.

ADAM. We will not fear:
 We were brave sinning.

EVE. Yea, I plucked the fruit
 With eyes upturned to heaven and seeing there
 Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,—not God.
 My heart, which beat then, sinks. The sun hath sunk
 Out of sight with our Eden.

ADAM. Night is near.

EVE. And God's curse, nearest. Let us travel back
 And stand within the sword-glare till we die,
 Believing it is better to meet death
 Than suffer desolation.

ADAM. Nay, beloved!
 We must not pluck death from the Maker's hand,
 As erst we plucked the apple: we must wait
 Until He gives death as he gave us life,
 Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift
 Because we spoilt its sweetness with our sin.

EVE. Ah, ah! dost thou discern what I behold?

ADAM. I see all. How the spirits in thine eyes
 From their dilated orbits bound before
 To meet the spectral Dread!

EVE. I am afraid—
 Ah, ah! the twilight bristles wild with shapes

Of intermittent motion, aspect vague
 And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep the earth,
 Keeping slow time with horrors in the blood.
 How near they reach . . . and far! How gray they move—
 Treading upon the darkness without feet,
 And fluttering on the darkness without wings!
 Some run like dogs, with noses to the ground;
 Some keep one path, like sheep; some rock like trees;
 Some glide like a fallen leaf; and some flow on
 Copious as rivers.

ADAM. Some spring up like fire:
 And some coil . . .

EVE. Ah, ah! dost thou pause to say
 Like what?—coil like the serpent, when he fell
 From all the emerald splendor of his height
 And writhed, and could not climb against the curse,
 Not a ring's length. I am afraid—afraid—
 I think it is God's will to make me afraid,—
 Permitting **THESE** to haunt us in the place
 Of his belovèd angels—gone from us
 Because we are not pure. Dear Pity of God,
 That didst permit the angels to go home
 And live no more with us who are not pure,
 Save *us* too from a loathly company—
 Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,
 As *we* are in the purest! Pity us—
 Us too! nor shut us in the dark, away
 From verity and from stability,
 Or what we name such through the precedence
 Of earth's adjusted uses,—leave us not
 To doubt betwixt our senses and our souls,
 Which are the more distraught and full of pain
 And weak of apprehension!

ADAM. Courage, Sweet!
 The mystic shapes ebb back from us, and drop
 With slow concentric movement, each on each,—
 Expressing wider spaces,—and collapsed
 In lines more definite for imagery
 And clearer for relation, till the throng
 Of shapeless spectra merge into a few

Distinguishable phantasms vague and grand
Which sweep out and around us vastly
And hold us in a circle and a calm.

EVE. Strange phantasms of pale shadow! there are twelve.

Thou who didst name all lives, hast names for these?

ADAM. Methinks this is the zodiac of the earth,
Which rounds us with a visionary dread,
Responding with twelve shadowy signs of earth,
In fantasque opposition and approach,
To those celestial, constellated twelve
Which palpitate adown the silent nights
Under the pressure of the hand of God
Stretched wide in benediction. At this hour,
Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of heaven:
But, girdling close our nether wilderness,
The zodiac-figures of the earth loom slow,—
Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and time,
In twelve colossal shades instead of stars,
Through which the ecliptic line of mystery
Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting scope,
Foreshowing life and death.

EVE. By dream or sense,
Do we see this?

ADAM. Our spirits have climbed high
By reason of the passion of our grief,
And, from the top of sense, looked over sense
To the significance and heart of things
Rather than things themselves.

EVE. And the dim twelve . . .

ADAM. Are dim exponents of the creature-life
As earth contains it. Gaze on them, beloved!
By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall assuage
The terror of the shadows,—what is known
Subduing the unknown and taming it
From all prodigious dread. That phantasm, there,
Presents a lion, albeit twenty times
As large as any lion—with a roar
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horror stirring in his mane.

And, there, a pendulous shadow seems to weigh—
Good against ill, perchance; and there, a crab
Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all the ground,
Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself.
A bull stands hornèd here with gibbous glooms;
And a ram likewise: and a scorpion writhes
Its tail in ghastly slime and stings the dark.
This way a goat leaps with wild blank of beard;
And here, fantastic fishes dusky float,
Using the calm for waters, while their fins
Throb out quick rhythms along the shallow air.
While images more human—

EVE. How he stands,
That phantasm of a man—who is not *thou*!
Two phantasms of two men!

ADAM. One that sustains,
And one that strives,—resuming, so, the ends
Of manhood's curse of labor. Dost thou see
That phantasm of a woman?

EVE. I have seen;
But look off to those small humanities
Which draw me tenderly across my fear,—
Lesser and fainter than my womanhood,
Or yet thy manhood—with strange innocence
Set in the misty lines of head and hand.
They lean together! I would gaze on them
Longer and longer, till my watching eyes,
As the stars do in watching anything,
Should light them forward from their outline vague
To clear configuration.

Two SPIRITS, of Organic and Inorganic Nature, arise from the ground.

But what Shapes
Rise up between us in the open space,
And thrust me into horror, back from hope!

ADAM. Colossal Shapes—twin sovran images,
With a disconsolate, blank majesty
Set in their wondrous faces! with no look,
And yet an aspect—a significance

Of individual life and passionate ends,
Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound,
O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin sound!
How it comes, wheeling as the pale moth wheels,
Wheeling and wheeling in continuous wail
Around the cyclic zodiac, and gains force,
And gathers, settling coldly like a moth,
On the wan faces of these images
We see before us,—whereby modified,
It draws a straight line of articulate song
From out that spiral faintness of lament,
And, by one voice, expresses many griefs.

FIRST SPIRIT.

I am the spirit of the harmless earth.
God spake me softly out among the stars,
As softly as a blessing of much worth;
And then his smile did follow unawares,
That all things fashioned so for use and duty
Might shine anointed with his chrism of beauty—
Yet I wail!

I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual fall;
Individual aspect and complexity
Of gyratory orb and interval
Lost in the fluent motion of delight
Toward the high ends of Being beyond sight—
Yet I wail!

SECOND SPIRIT.

I am the spirit of the harmless beasts,
Of flying things, and creeping things, and swimming;
Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,
That found the love-kiss on the goblet brimming,
And tasted in each drop within the measure
The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's good pleasure—
Yet I wail!

What a full hum of life around his lips
Bore witness to the fulness of creation!
How all the grand words were full-laden ships
Each sailing onward from enunciation

To separate existence,—and each bearing
 The creature's power of joying, hoping, fearing!
 Yet I wail!

EVE. They wail, beloved! they speak of glory and God,
 And they wail—wail. That burden of the song
 Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls
 Into the lap of silence.

ADAM. Hark, again!

FIRST SPIRIT.

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,
 My joy stood up within me bold to add
 A word to God's,—and, when his work was full,
 To 'very good' responded 'very glad!'
 Filtered through roses did the light enclose me,
 And bunches of the grape swam blue across me—
 Yet I wail!

SECOND SPIRIT.

I bounded with my panthers: I rejoiced
 In my young tumbling lions rolled together:
 My stag, the river at his fetlocks, poised
 Then dipped his antlers through the golden weather
 In the same ripple which the alligator
 Left, in his joyous troubling of the water—
 Yet I wail!

FIRST SPIRIT.

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,
 What wordless triumph did your voices render!
 O mountain-summits, where the angels stood
 And shook from head and wing thick dews of splendor!
 How, with a holy quiet, did your Earthy
 Accept that Heavenly, knowing ye were worthy!
 Yet I wail!

SECOND SPIRIT.

O my wild wood-dogs, with your listening eyes!
 My horses—my ground-eagles, for swift fleeing!
 My birds, with viewless wings of harmonies,
 My calm cold fishes of a silver being,
 How happy were ye, living and possessing,
 O fair half-souls capacious of full blessing!
 Yet I wail!

FIRST SPIRIT.

I wail, I wail! Now hear my charge to-day,
 Thou man, thou woman, marked as the misdoers
 By God's sword at your backs! I lent my clay
 To make your bodies, which had grown more flowers:
 And now, in change for what I lent, ye give me
 The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to cleave me—
 And I wail!

SECOND SPIRIT.

I wail, I wail! Behold ye that I fasten
 My sorrow's fang upon your souls dishonored?
 Accursed transgressors! down the steep ye hasten,—
 Your crown's weight on the world, to drag it downward
 Unto your ruin. Lo! my lions, scenting
 The blood of wars, roar hoarse and unrelenting—
 And I wail!

FIRST SPIRIT.

I wail, I wail! Do you hear that I wail?
 I had no part in your transgression—none.
 My roses on the bough did bud not pale,
 My rivers did not loiter in the sun;
 I was obedient. Wherefore in my centre
 Do I thrill at this curse of death and winter?—
 Do I wail?

SECOND SPIRIT.

I wail, I wail! I wail in the assault
 Of undeserved perdition, sorely wounded!
 My nightingale sang sweet without a fault,
 My gentle leopards innocently bounded.
 We were obedient. What is this convulses
 Our blameless life with pangs and fever pulses?
 And I wail!

EVE. I choose God's thunder and his angels' swords
 To die by, Adam, rather than such words.
 Let us pass out and flee.

ADAM. We cannot flee.

This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
 Curles round us, like a river cold and drear,
 And shuts us in, constraining us to hear.

FIRST SPIRIT.

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners, strike
 A sense of death to me, and undug graves!
 The heart of earth, once calm, is trembling like
 The ragged foam along the ocean-waves:
 The restless earthquakes rock against each other;
 The elements moan 'round me—'Mother, mother'—
 And I wail!

SECOND SPIRIT.

Your melancholy looks do pierce me through;
 Corruption swathes the paleness of your beauty.
 Why have ye done this thing? What did we do
 That we should fall from bliss as ye from duty?
 Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for their jesses,
 Fierce howl the wolves along the wildernesses—
 And I wail!

ADAM. To thee, the Spirit of the harmless earth,
 To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless lives,
 Inferior creatures but still innocent,
 Be salutation from a guilty mouth
 Yet worthy of some audience and respect
 From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,
 God hath rebuked us, who is over us
 To give rebuke or death, and if ye wail
 Because of any suffering from our sin,
 Ye who are under and not over us,
 Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
 And pass out from our presence in such peace
 As we have left you, to enjoy revenge
 Such as the heavens have made you. Verily,
 There must be strife between us, large as sin.

EVE. No strife, mine Adam! Let us not stand high
 Upon the wrong we did to reach disdain,
 Who rather should be humbler evermore
 Since self-made sadder. Adam! shall I speak
 I who spake once to such a bitter end—
 Shall I speak humbly now who once was proud?
 I, schooled by sin to more humility
 Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king—
 My king, if not the world's?

ADAM.

Speak as thou wilt.

EVE. Thus, then—my hand in thine—

. . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits!

I pray you humbly in the name of God,
 Not to say of these tears, which are impure—
 Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth
 From clean volitions toward a spotted will,
 From the wronged to the wronger, this and no more!
 I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,
 That absolute pardon is impossible
 From you to me, by reason of my sin,—
 And that I cannot evermore, as once,
 With worthy acceptation of pure joy,
 Behold the trances of the holy hills
 Beneath the leaning stars, or watch the vales
 Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy,—
 Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between
 Two grassy uplands,—and the river-wells
 Work out their bubbling mysteries underground,—
 And all the birds sing, till for joy of song
 They lift their trembling wings as if to heave
 The too-much weight of music from their heart
 And float it up the æther. I am 'ware
 That these things I can no more apprehend
 With a pure organ into a full delight,—
 The sense of beauty and of melody
 Being no more aided in me by the sense
 Of personal adjustment to those heights
 Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,
 But rather coupled darkly and made ashamed
 By my percipency of sin and fall
 In melancholy of humiliant thoughts.
 But, oh! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this
 Your accusation must confront my soul,
 And your pathetic utterance and full gaze
 Must evermore subdue me,—be content!
 Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,
 Not to say loving! let my tears fall thick
 As watering dews of Eden, unrepached;
 And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,

Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,
 And peradventure better while more sad!
 For look to it, sweet Spirits, look well to it,
 It will not be amiss in you who kept
 The law of your own righteousness, and keep
 The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves,—
 To pity me twice fallen, from that, and this,
 From joy of place, and also right of wail,
 ‘I wail’ being not for me—only ‘I sin.’
 Look to it, O sweet Spirits!

For was I not,

At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
 When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs
 Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
 All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God
 Held them suspended,—was I not, that hour,
 The lady of the world, princess of life,
 Mistress of feast and favor? Could I touch
 A rose with my white hand, but it became
 Redder at once? Could I walk leisurely
 Along our swarded garden, but the grass
 Tracked me with greenness? Could I stand aside
 A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
 But all the leaves did tremble as alive
 With songs of fifty birds who were made glad
 Because I stood there? Could I turn to look
 With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast,
 Now good for only weeping,—upon man,
 Angel, or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced
 Because I looked on him? Alas, alas!
 And is not this much woe, to cry ‘alas!’
 Speaking of joy? And is not this more shame,
 To have made the woe myself, from all that joy?
 To have stretched my hand, and plucked it from the tree,
 And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is not this
 Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit,
 And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have,
 Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy?

ADAM. I will not hear thee speak so. Harken, Spirits!
 Our God, who is the enemy of none

But only of their sin, hath set your hope
 And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.
 Show reverence, then, and never bruise her more
 With unpermitted and extreme reproach,—
 Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling down
 Beneath your trampling feet, God's gift to us
 Of sovranity by reason and freewill,
 Sinning against the province of the Soul
 To rule the soulless. Reverence her estate,
 And pass out from her presence with no words!

EVE. O dearest Heart, have patience with my heart!
 O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of reverence,
 And let me speak, for, not being innocent,
 It little doth become me to be proud,
 And I am prescient by the very hope
 And promise set upon me, that henceforth
 Only my gentleness shall make me great,
 My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spirits,
 Be witness that I stand in your reproof
 But one sun's length off from my happiness—
 Happy, as I have said, to look around,
 Clear to look up!—And now! I need not speak—
 Ye see me what I am; ye scorn me so,
 Because ye see me what I have made myself
 From God's best making! Alas,—peace forgone,
 Love wronged, and virtue forfeit, and tears wept
 Upon all, vainly! Alas, me! alas,
 Who have undone myself, from all that best,
 Fairest and sweetest, to this wretchedest
 Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast down—
 What word metes absolute loss? let absolute loss
 Suffice you for revenge. For I, who lived
 Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
 Wander to-day beneath the roofless world:
 I, reigning the earth's empress yesterday,
 Put off from me, to-day, your hate with prayers:
 I, yesterday, who answered the Lord God,
 Composed and glad as singing-birds the sun,
 Might shriek now from our dismal desert, 'God,'

And hear him make reply, 'What is thy need,
Thou whom I cursed to-day?'

ADAM.

Eve!

EVE.

I, at last,

Who yesterday was helpmate and delight
Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief
And curse-mete for him. And, so, pity us,
Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,
And let some tender peace, made of our pain,
Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow,
With boughs on both sides! In the shade of which,
When presently ye shall behold us dead,—
For the poor sake of our humility,
Breathe out your pardon on our breathless lips,
And drop your twilight dew against our brows,
And stroking with mild airs our harmless hands
Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love
Distilling through your pity over us,
And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass!

LUCIFER rises in the circle.

LUCIFER. Who talks here of a complement of grief?
Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?
Of hate subduable to pity? Eve?
Take counsel from thy counsellor the snake,
And boast no more in grief, nor hope from pain,
My docile Eve! I teach you to despond
Who taught you disobedience. Look around:—
Earth spirits and phantasms hear you talk unmoved,
As if ye were red clay again and talked!
What are your words to them—your grief to them—
Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the hand pause,
For *their* sake, in the plucking of the fruit,
That they should pause for *you*, in hating you?
Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,
Bring change upon their final doom? Behold,
Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,
And cannot expiate for it.

ADAM.

That is true.

LUCIFER. Ay, that is true. The clay-king testifies
To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—very true.

EARTH SPIRITS. I wail, I wail!

LUCIFER. And certes, *that* is true.

Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I

Could wail among you. O thou universe,

That holdest sin and woe,—more room for wail!

DISTANT STARRY VOICE. Ah, ah, Heosphoros! Heosphoros!

ADAM. Mark Lucifer! He changes awfully.

EVE. It seems as if he looked from grief to God

And could not see him. Wretched Lucifer!

ADAM. How he stands—yet an angel!

EARTH SPIRITS. We all wail!

LUCIFER (*after a pause*). Dost thou remember, Adam, when
the curse

Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak

Half-sheathed in primal woods and glittering

In spasms of awful sunshine at that hour,

A lion couched, part raised upon his paws,

With his calm massive face turned full on thine,

And his mane listening. When the ended curse

Left silence in the world, right suddenly

He sprang up rampant and stood straight and stiff,

As if the new reality of death

Were dashed against his eyes, and roared so fierce,

(Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat

Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)

And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills

Such fast keen echoes crumbling down the vales

Precipitately,—that the forest beasts,

One after one, did mutter a response

Of savage and of sorrowful complaint

Which trailed along the gorges. Then, at once,

He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height

Into the dusk of pines.

ADAM. It might have been.

I heard the curse alone.

EARTH SPIRITS. I wail, I wail!

LUCIFER. That lion is the type of what I am.

And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,

And roared, O Adam, comprehending doom,

So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,

I cry out here between the Heavens and Earth
 My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,
 Which damn me to this depth.

EARTH SPIRITS.

I wail, I wail

EVE. I wail—O God!

LUCIFER.

I scorn you that ye wail,

Who use your petty griefs for pedestals
 To stand on, beckoning pity from without,
 And deal in pathos of antithesis
 Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye are;—
 I scorn you like an angell! Yet, one cry
 I, too, would drive up like a column erect,
 Marble to marble, from my heart to heaven,
 A monument of anguish to transpierce
 And overtop your vapory complaints
 Expressed from feeble woes.

EARTH SPIRITS.

I wail, I wail

LUCIFER. For, O ye heavens, ye are my witnesses,

That *I*, struck out from nature in a blot,
 The outcast and the mildew of things good,
 The leper of angels, the excepted dust
 Under the common rain of daily gifts,—
 I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
 To whom the highest and the lowest alike
 Say, Go from us—we have no need of thee,—
 Was made by God like others. Good and fair,
 He did create me!—ask him, if not fair!
 Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly
 His blessing for chief angels on my head
 Until it grew there, a crown crystallized!
 Ask, if he never called me by my name,
Lucifer—kindly said as ‘Gabriel’—
Lucifer—soft as ‘Michael’ while serene
 I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
 Answered ‘my Father,’ innocent of shame
 And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye think,
 White angels in your niches,—I repent,
 And would tread down my own offences back
 To service at the footstool? *that* ’s read wrong!
 I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—

Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep,
 Against the sides of this prodigious pit
 I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of wail
 On each side, to meet anguish everywhere,
 And to attest it in the ecstasy
 And exaltation of a woe sustained
 Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along

Your wilderness, vain mortals! Puny griefs
 In transitory shapes, be henceforth dwarfed
 To your own conscience, by the dread extremes
 Of what I am and have been. If ye have fallen,
 It is but a step's fall,—the whole ground beneath
 Strewn woolly soft with promise! if ye have sinned,
 Your prayers tread high as angels! if ye have grieved,
 Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,
 The power to die disproves the right to grieve.
 Go to! ye call this ruin? I half-scorn
 The ill I did you! Were ye wronged by me,
 Hated and tempted and undone of me,—
 Still, what's your hurt to mine of doing hurt,
 Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?
 This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and cuts through
 The hand that wields it.

Go! I curse you all.

Hate one another—feebly—as ye can!
 I would not certes cut you short in hate,
 Far be it from me! hate on as ye can!
 I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth,
 As wintry blast may breathe on wintry leaves
 And lifting up their brownness show beneath
 The branches bare. Beseech you, spirits, give
 To Eve who beggarly entreats your love
 For her and Adam when they shall be dead,
 An answer rather fitting to the sin
 Than to the sorrow—as the heavens, I trow,
 For justice' sake gave theirs.

I curse you both,

Adam and Eve. Say grace as after meat,
 After my curses! May your tears fall hot

On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures here,—
 And yet rejoice! Increase and multiply,
 Ye in your generations, in all plagues,
 Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,
 And hideous forms of life and fears of death,—
 The thought of death being alway imminent,
 Immovable and dreadful in your life,
 And deafly and dumbly insignificant
 Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,
 Whichever of you lieth dead the first,
 Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice!
 My curse catch at you strongly, body and soul,
 And HE find no redemption—nor the wing
 Of seraph move your way; and yet rejoice!
 Rejoice,—because ye have not, set in you,
 This hate which shall pursue you—this fire-hate
 Which glares without, because it burns within—
 Which kills from ashes—this potential hate,
 Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
 To God and his reflex beatitudes,
 Moan ever, in the central universe,
 With the great woe of striving against Love
 And gasp for space amid the Infinite,
 And toss for rest amid the Desertness,
 Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect
 To kingship of resistant agony
 Toward the Good round me—hating good and love,
 And willing to hate good and to hate love,
 And willing to will on so evermore,
 Scorning the past and damning the to-come—
 Go and rejoice! I curse you.

LUCIFER *vanishes*.

EARTH SPIRITS.

And we scorn you! there's no pardon
 Which can lean to you aright.
 When your bodies take the guerdon
 Of the death-curse in our sight,
 Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall transcend you:
 Then ye shall not move an eyelid
 Though the stars look down your eyes;

And the earth which ye defilèd
 Shall expose you to the skies,—
 'Lo! these kings of ours, who sought to comprehend you.'

FIRST SPIRIT.

And the elements shall boldly
 All your dust to dust constrain.
 Unresistedly and coldly
 I will smite you with my rain.
 From the slowest of my frosts is no receding.

SECOND SPIRIT.

And my little worm, appointed
 To assume a royal part,
 He shall reign, crowned and anointed,
 O'er the noble human heart.
 Give him counsel against losing of that Eden!

ADAM. Do ye scorn us? Back your scorn
 Toward your faces gray and lorn,
 As the wind drives back the rain,
 Thus I drive with passion-strife,
 I who stand beneath God's sun,
 Made like God, and, though undone,
 Not unmade for love and life.

Lo! ye utter threats in vain.
 By my free will that chose sin,
 By mine agony within
 Round the passage of the fire,
 By the pinings which disclose
 That my native soul is higher
 Than what it chose,

We are yet too high, O Spirits, for your disdain!

EVE. Nay, beloved! If these be low,
 We confront them from no height.
 We have stooped down to their level
 By infecting them with evil,
 And their scorn that meets our blow
 Scathes aright.
 Amen. Let it be so.

EARTH SPIRITS.

We shall triumph—triumph greatly
 When ye lie beneath the sward.

There, our lily shall grow stately
 Though ye answer not a word,
 And her fragrance shall be scornful of your silence:
 While your throne ascending calmly
 We, in heirdom of your soul,
 Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,
 The dilated ocean roll,
 By the thoughts that throbbed within you, round the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit
 Your significance of will,
 And the grandeur of your spirit
 Shall our broad savannahs fill;
 In our winds, your exultations shall be springing!
 Even your parlance which inveigles,
 By our rudeness shall be won.
 Hearts poetic in our eagles
 Shall beat up against the sun
 And strike downward in articulate clear singing.

Your bold speeches our Behemoth
 With his thunderous jaw shall wield.
 Your high fancies shall our Mammoth
 Breathe sublimely up the shield
 Of Saint Michael at God's throne, who waits to speed him:
 Till the heavens' smooth-groovèd thunder
 Spinning back, shall leave them clear,
 And the angels, smiling wonder,
 With dropt looks from sphere to sphere,
 Shall cry 'Ho, ye heirs of Adam! ye exceed him.'
 ADAM. Root out thine eyes, Sweet, from the dreary ground!
 Beloved, we may be overcome by God,
 But not by these.

EVE. By God, perhaps, in these.

ADAM. I think, not so. Had God foredoomed despair
 He had not spoken hope. He may destroy
 Certes, but not deceive.

EVE. Behold this rose!
 I plucked it in our bower of Paradise
 This morning as I went forth, and my heart

Has beat against its petals all the day.
 I thought it would be always red and full
 As when I plucked it. *Is it?*—ye may see!
 I cast it down to you that ye may see,
 All of you!—count the petals lost of it,
 And note the colors faded! ye may see!
 And I am as it is, who yesterday
 Grew in the same place. O ye spirits of earth,
 I almost, from my miserable heart,
 Could here upbraid you for your cruel heart,
 Which will not let me, down the slope of death,
 Draw any of your pity after me,
 Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
 As my flower, there, in mine.

A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct HUMAN VOICES spins around the Earth-zodiac, filling the circle with its presence; and then, wailing off into the East, carries the rose away with it. EVE falls upon her face. ADAM stands erect.

ADAM. So, verily,
 The last departs.

EVE. So Memory follows Hope,
 And Life both. Love said to me, 'Do not die,'
 And I replied, 'O Love, I will not die.
 I exiled and I will not orphan Love.'
 But now it is no choice of mine to die:
 My heart throbs from me.

ADAM. Call it straightway back!
 Death's consummation crowns completed life,
 Or comes too early. Hope being set on thee
 For others, if for others then for thee,—
 For thee and me.

The wind revolves from the East, and round again to the East, perfumed by the Eden rose, and full of VOICES which sweep out into articulation as they pass.

Let thy soul shake its leaves
 To feel the mystic wind—hark!

EVE. I hear life.

INFANT VOICES *passing in the wind.*

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we receive

Is a warm thing and a new,
 Which we softly bud into
 From the heart and from the brain,—
 Something strange that overmuch is
 Of the sound and of the sight,
 Flowing round in trickling touches,
 With a sorrow and delight,—
 Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

YOUTHFUL VOICES *passing*.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we achieve
 Is a loud thing and a bold
 Which with pulses manifold
 Strikes the heart out full and fain—
 Active doer, noble liver,
 Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,
 Though the vessel's prow will quiver
 At the lifting of the anchor:
 Yet do we strive in vain?

INFANT VOICES *passing*.

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

POET VOICES *passing*.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we conceive
 Is a clear thing and a fair,
 Which we set in crystal air
 That its beauty may be plain!
 With a breathing and a flooding
 Of the heaven-life on the whole,
 While we hear the forests budding
 To the music of the soul—
 Yet is it tuned in vain?

INFANT VOICES *passing*.

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

PHILOSOPHIC VOICES *passing*.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we perceive
 Is a great thing and a grave
 Which for others' use we have,
 Duty-laden to remain.
 We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
 Of the right against the wrong;
 We are earnest-hearted teachers
 Of the truth which maketh strong—
 Yet do we teach in vain?

INFANT VOICES *passing*.

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

REVEL VOICES *passing*.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we reprove
 Is a low thing and a light,
 Which is jested out of sight
 And made worthy of disdain!
 Strike with bold electric laughter
 The high tops of things divine—
 Turn thy head, my brother, after,
 Lest thy tears fall in my wine!
 For is all laughed in vain?

INFANT VOICES *passing*.

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

EVE. I hear a sound of life—of life like ours—

Of laughter and of wailing, of grave speech,
 Of little plaintive voices innocent,
 Of life in separate courses flowing out
 Like our four rivers to some outward main.
 I hear life—life!

ADAM. And, so, thy cheeks have snatched
 Scarlet to paleness, and thine eyes drink fast
 Of glory from full cups, and thy moist lips
 Seem trembling, both of them, with earnest doubts
 Whether to utter words or only smile.

EVE. Shall I be mother of the coming life?

Hear the steep generations, how they fall
 Adown the visionary stairs of Time
 Like supernatural thunders—far, yet near,—
 Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills.
 Am I a cloud to these—mother to these?

EARTH SPIRITS. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

EVE *sinks down again.*

POET VOICES *passing.*

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we conceive
 Is a noble thing and high,
 Which we climb up loftily
 To view God without a stain;
 Till, recoiling where the shade is,
 We retread our steps again,
 And descend the gloomy Hades
 To resume man's mortal pain.
 Shall it be climbed in vain?

INFANT VOICES *passing.*

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

LOVE VOICES *passing.*

O we live, O we live—
 And this life we would retrieve,
 Is a faithful thing apart
 Which we love in, heart to heart,
 Until one heart fitteth twain.
 'Wilt thou be one with me?'
 'I will be one with thee.'
 'Ha, ha!—we love and live!'
 Alas! ye love and die.
 Shriek—who shall reply?
 For is it not loved in vain?

INFANT VOICES *passing.*

Rock us softly,
 Though it be all in vain.

AGED VOICES *passing.*

O we live, O we live—
 And this life we would survive,
 Is a gloomy thing and brief,

Which consummated in grief,
Leaveth ashes for all gain.
Is it not *all* in vain?

INFANT VOICES *passing*.

Rock us softly,
Though it be *all* in vain.

VOICES *die away*.

EARTH SPIRITS. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

EVE. The voices of foreshown Humanity

Die off;—so let me die.

ADAM. So let us die,

When God's will soundeth the right hour of death.

EARTH SPIRITS. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

EVE. O Spirits! by the gentleness ye use

In winds at night, and floating clouds at noon,

In gliding waters under lily-leaves,

In chirp of crickets, and the settling hush

A bird makes in her nest with feet and wings,—

Fulfil your natures now!

EARTH SPIRITS. Agreed, allowed!

We gather out our natures like a cloud,

And thus fulfil their lightnings! Thus, and thus!

Hearken, oh hearken to us!

FIRST SPIRIT.

As the storm-wind blows bleakly from the norland,

As the snow-wind beats blindly on the moorland,

As the simoom drives hot across the desert,

As the thunder roars deep in the Unmeasured,

As the torrent tears the ocean-world to atoms,

As the whirlpool grinds it fathoms below fathoms,

Thus,—and thus!

SECOND SPIRIT.

As the yellow toad, that spits its poison chilly,

As the tiger, in the jungle crouching stilly,

As the wild boar, with ragged tusks of anger,

As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering clangor,

As the vultures, that scream against the thunder,

As the owlets, that sit and moan asunder,

Thus,—and thus!

EVE. Adam! God!

ADAM. Cruel, unrelenting Spirits!
 By the power in me of the sovran soul
 Whose thoughts keep pace yet with the angel's march,
 I charge you into silence—trample you
 Down to obedience. I am king of you!

EARTH SPIRITS.

Ha, ha! thou art king!
 With a sin for a crown,
 And a soul undone!
 Thou, the antagonized,
 Tortured and agonized,
 Held in the ring
 Of the zodiac!
 Now, king, beware!
 We are many and strong
 Whom thou standest among,—
 And we press on the air,
 And we stifle thee back,
 And we multiply where
 Thou wouldst trample us down
 From rights of our own
 To an utter wrong—
 And, from under the feet of thy scorn,
 O forlorn,
 We shall spring up like corn,
 And our stubble be strong.

ADAM. God, there is power in thee! I make appeal
 Unto thy kingship.

EVE. There is pity in THEE,
 O sinned against, great God!—My seed, my seed,
 There is hope set on THEE—I cry to thee,
 Thou mystic Seed that shalt be!—leave us not
 In agony beyond what we can bear,
 Fallen in debasement below thunder-mark,
 A mark for scorning—taunted and perplexed
 By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,
 Whom thou, Lord, rulest alway! O my Seed,
 Through the tempestuous years that rain so thick
 Betwixt my ghostly vision and thy face,

Let me have token! for my soul is bruised
Before the serpent's head is.

*A vision of CHRIST appears in the midst of the Zodiac, which
pales before the heavenly light. The EARTH SPIRITS grow
grayer and fainter.*

CHRIST.

I AM HERE!

ADAM. This is God!—Curse us not, God, any more!

EVE. But gazing so—so—with omnific eyes,

Lift my soul upward till it touch thy feet!

Or lift it only,—not to seem too proud,—

To the low height of some good angel's feet,

For such to tread on when he walketh straight

And thy lips praise him!

CHRIST.

Spirits of the earth,

I meet you with rebuke for the reproach

And cruel and unmitigated blame

Ye cast upon your masters. True, they have sinned;

And true their sin is reckoned into loss

For you the sinless. Yet, your innocence

Which of you praises? since God made your acts

Inherent in your lives, and bound your hands

With instincts and imperious sanctities

From self-defacement. Which of you disdains

These sinners who in falling proved their height

Above you by their liberty to fall?

And which of you complains of loss by them,

For whose delight and use ye have your life

And honor in creation? Ponder it!

This regent and sublime Humanity,

Though fallen, exceeds you! this shall film your sun,

Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of cloud,

Turn back your rivers, footpath all your seas,

Lay flat your forests, master with a look

Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down

Your eagle flying. Nay, without this law

Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by beast

Devouring,—tree by tree, with strangling roots

And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would gaze on God

With imperceptive blankness up the stars,

And mutter, 'Why, God, hast thou made us thus?'

And pining to a sallow idiocy
Stagger up blindly against the ends of life,
Then stagnate into rottenness and drop
Heavily—poor, dead matter—piecemeal down
The abysmal spaces—like a little stone
Let fall to chaos. Therefore over you
Receive man's sceptre!—therefore be content
To minister with voluntary grace
And melancholy pardon, every rite
And function in you, to the human hand!
Be ye to man as angels are to God,
Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,
Suggesters to his soul of higher things
Than any of your highest! So at last,
He shall look round on you with lids too straight
To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well,
And bless you when he prays his secret prayers,
And praise you when he sings his open songs
For the clear song-note he has learnt in you
Of purifying sweetness, and extend
Across your head his golden fantasies
Which glorify you into soul from sense.
Go, serve him for such price! That not in vain
Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place
My word here for an oath, mine oath for act
To be hereafter. In the name of which
Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,
I bless you through the hope and through the peace
Which are mine,—to the Love, which is myself.

EVE. Speak on still, Christ! Albeit thou bless me not
In set words, I am blessed in hearkening thee—
Speak, Christ!

CHRIST. Speak, Adam! Bless the woman, man!
It is thine office.

ADAM. Mother of the world,
Take heart before this Presence! Lo, my voice,
Which, naming erst the creatures, did express
(God breathing through my breath) the attributes
And instincts of each creature in its name,
Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and heaves

Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,—
 A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,
 Out fairly and wide. Henceforward, arise, aspire
 To all the calms and magnanimities,
 The lofty uses and the noble ends,
 The sanctified devotion and full work,
 To which thou art elect for evermore,
 First woman, wife, and mother!

EVE.

And first in sin.

ADAM. And also the sole bearer of the Seed
 Whereby sin dieth. Raise the majesties
 Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,
 And front with level eyelids the To-come,
 And all the dark o' the world! Rise, woman, rise
 To thy peculiar and best altitudes
 Of doing good and of enduring ill,
 Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,
 And reconciling all that ill and good
 Unto the patience of a constant hope,—
 Rise with thy daughters! If sin came by thee,
 And by sin, death,—the ransom-righteousness,
 The heavenly life and compensative rest
 Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee
 Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
 An angel of the woe thou didst achieve,
 Found acceptable to the world instead
 Of others of that name, of whose bright steps
 Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied;
 Something thou hast to bear through womanhood,
 Peculiar suffering answering to the sin,—
 Some pang paid down for each new human life,
 Some weariness in guarding such a life,
 Some coldness from the guarded, some mistrust
 From those thou hast too well served, from those beloved
 Too loyally some treason; feebleness
 Within thy heart, and cruelty without,
 And pressures of an alien tyranny
 With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
 And stronger sinews. But, go to! thy love
 Shall chant itself its own beatitudes

After its own life-working. A child's kiss
 Set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad;
 A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich;
 A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong;
 Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
 Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown
 I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing
 With looks of prompting love—to keep thee clear
 Of all reproach against the sin forgone,
 From all the generations which succeed.
 Thy hand which plucked the apple I clasp close,
 Thy lips which spake wrong counsel I kiss close,
 I bless thee in the name of Paradise
 And by the memory of Edenic joys
 Forfeit and lost,—by that last cypress tree,
 Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out,
 And by the blessed nightingale which threw
 Its melancholy music after us,—
 And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells
 Did follow softly, plucking us behind
 Back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers
 And fourfold river-courses.—By all these,
 I bless thee to the contraries of these,
 I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,
 To the elemental change and turbulence,
 And to the roar of the estrangèd beasts,
 And to the solemn dignities of grief,—
 To each one of these ends,—and to their END
 Of Death and the hereafter.

EVE.

I accept

For me and for my daughters this high part
 Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work
 Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest,
 And in the place of Eden's lost delight
 Worthy endurance of permitted pain;
 While on my longest patience there shall wait
 Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east,
 Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself
 Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,
 That humbleness may keep it in the shade.

Shall it be so? shall I smile, saying so?
 O Seed! O King! O God, who *shalt* be seed,—
 What shall I say? As Eden's fountains swelled
 Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul
 Betwixt thy love and power!

And, sweetest thoughts

Of forgone Eden! now, for the first time
 Since God said 'Adam,' walking through the trees,
 I dare to pluck you as I plucked erewhile
 The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope.
 So pluck I you—so largely—with both hands,
 And throw you forward on the outer earth,
 Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

ADAM. As thou, Christ, to illume it, holdest Heaven
 Broadly over our heads.

*The CHRIST is gradually transfigured, during the following
 phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.*

EVE. O Saviour Christ

Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun!

ADAM. We worship in thy silence, Saviour Christ!

EVE. Thy brows grow grander with a forecast woe,—
 Diviner, with the possible of death.

We worship in thy sorrow, Saviour Christ!

ADAM. How do thy clear, still eyes transpierce our souls,
 As gazing *through* them toward the Father-throne
 In a pathological, full Deity,
 Serenely as the stars gaze through the air
 Straight on each other!

EVE. O pathetic Christ,

Thou standest mute in glory, like the moon!

CHRIST. Eternity stands alway fronting God;

A stern colossal image, with blind eyes

And grand dim lips that murmur evermore

God, God, God! while the rush of life and death,

The roar of act and thought, of evil and good,

The avalanches of the ruining worlds

Tolling down space,—the new worlds' genesis

Budding in fire,—the gradual humming growth

Of the ancient atoms and first forms of earth,

The slow procession of the swathing seas
 And firmamental waters,—and the noise
 Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—
 All these flow onward in the intervals
 Of that reiterated sound of—God!
 Which word innumerable angels straightway lift
 Wide on celestial altitudes of song
 And choral adoration, and then drop
 The burden softly, shutting the last notes
 In silver wings. Howbeit in the noon of time
 Eternity shall wax as dumb as Death,
 While a new voice beneath the spheres shall cry,
 ‘God! why hast thou forsaken me, my God?’
 And not a voice in Heaven shall answer it.

The transfiguration is complete in sadness.

ADAM. Thy speech is of the Heavenlies, yet, O Christ,
 Awfully human are thy voice and face!

EVE. My nature overcomes me from thine eyes.

CHRIST. In the set noon of time shall one from Heaven,
 An angel fresh from looking upon God,
 Descend before a woman, blessing her
 With perfect benediction of pure love,
 For all the world in all its elements,
 For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea,
 For all men in the body and in the soul,
 Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

EVE. O pale, pathetic Christ—I worship thee!
 I thank thee for that woman!

CHRIST. Then, at last,
 I, wrapping round me your humanity,
 Which, being sustained, shall neither break nor burn
 Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread earth,
 And ransom you and it, and set strong peace
 Betwixt you and its creatures. With my pangs
 I will confront your sins; and since those sins
 Have sunken to all Nature’s heart from yours,
 The tears of my clean soul shall follow them
 And set a holy passion to work clear
 Absolute consecration. In my brow
 Of kingly whiteness shall be crowned anew

Your discrowned human nature. Look on me!
 As I shall be uplifted on a cross
 In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread,
 So shall I lift up in my piercèd hands,
 Not into dark, but light—not unto death,
 But life,—beyond the reach of guilt and grief,
 The whole creation. Henceforth in my name
 Take courage, O thou woman,—man, take hope!
 Your grave shall be as smooth as Eden's sward,
 Beneath the steps of your prospective thoughts,
 And, one step past it, a new Eden-gate
 Shall open on a hinge of harmony
 And let you through to mercy. Ye shall fall
 No more, within that Eden, nor pass out
 Any more from it. In which hope, move on,
 First sinners and first mourners! Live and love,—
 Doing both nobly because lowly!
 Live and work, strongly because patiently!
 And, for the deed of death, trust it to God
 That it be well done, unrepented of,
 And not to loss! And thence, with constant prayers,
 Fasten your souls so high, that constantly
 The smile of your heroic cheer may float
 Above all floods of earthly agonies,
 Purification being the joy of pain!
*The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM and EVE stand in an
 ecstasy. The Earth-zodiac pales away shade by shade, as the
 stars, star by star, shine out in the sky; and the following
 chant from the two EARTH SPIRITS (as they sweep back into
 the Zodiac and disappear with it) accompanies the process
 of change.*

EARTH SPIRITS.

By the mighty word thus spoken
 Both for living and for dying,
 We our homage-oath, once broken,
 Fasten back again in sighing,
 And the creatures and the elements renew their covenanting.

Here, forgive us all our scorning;
 Here, we promise milder duty:

And the evening and the morning
 Shall re-organize in beauty
 A sabbath day of sabbath joy, for universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
 May be strong to overcome us,
 If this mortal and unholy
 We still fail to cast out from us,
 If we turn upon you, unaware, your own dark influences,—

If ye tremble when surrounded
 By our forest pine and palm trees,
 If we cannot cure the wounded
 With our gum trees and our balm trees,
 And if your souls all mournfully sit down among your
 senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us!
 We are gentle in our langour;
 Much more good ye shall have near us
 Than any pain or anger,
 And our God's refracted blessing in our blessing shall be
 given.

By the desert's endless vigil
 We will solemnize your passions,
 By the wheel of the black eagle
 We will teach you exaltations,
 When he sails against the wind, to the white spot up in
 heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
 To your weariness of nature,
 And our hands shall stroke the curse's
 Dreary furrows from the creature,
 Till your bodies shall lie smooth in death and straight and
 slumberful.

Then, a couch we will provide you
 Where no summer heats shall dazzle,

Strewing on you and beside you
 Thyme and rosemary and basil,
 And the yew-tree shall grow overhead to keep all safe and
 cool.

Till the Holy Blood awaited
 Shall be chrism around us running,
 Whereby, newly-consecrated,
 We shall leap up in God's sunning,
 To join the spheric company which purer worlds assemble:

While, renewed by new evangels,
 Soul-consummated, made glorious,
 Ye shall brighten past the angels,
 Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious,
 And the rays around his feet beneath your sobbing lips shall
 tremble.

*The phantastic Vision has all passed; the Earth-zodiac has
 broken like a belt, and is dissolved from the Desert. The
 EARTH SPIRITS vanish, and the stars shine out above.*

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS

While ADAM and EVE advance into the Desert, hand in hand

Hear our heavenly promise
 Through your mortal passion!
 Love, ye shall have from us,
 In a pure relation.
 As a fish or bird
 Swims or flies, if moving,
 We unseen are heard
 To live on by loving.
 Far above the glances
 Of your eager eyes,
 Listen! we are loving.
 Listen, through man's ignorances—
 Listen, through God's mysteries—
 Listen down the heart of things,
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings

Murmurous with loving.
 Through the opal door
 Listen evermore
 How we live by loving!

FIRST SEMICHORUS.

When your bodies therefore
 Reach the grave their goal,
 Softly will we care for
 Each enfranchised soul.
 Softly and unlothly
 Through the door of opal
 Toward the heavenly people,
 Floated on a minor fine
 Into the full chant divine,
 We will draw you smoothly,—
 While the human in the minor
 Makes the harmony diviner.
 Listen to our loving!

SECOND SEMICHORUS.

There, a sough of glory
 Shall breathe on you as you come,
 Ruffling round the doorway
 All the light of angeldom.
 From the empyrean centre
 Heavenly voices shall repeat,
 'Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter,
 For the chrism on you is sweet!'
 And every angel in the place
 Lowlily shall bow his face,
 Folded fair on softened sounds,
 Because upon your hands and feet
 He images his Master's wounds.
 Listen to our loving!

FIRST SEMICHORUS.

So, in the universe's
 Consummated undoing,
 Our seraphs of white mercies
 Shall hover round the ruin.
 Their wings shall stream upon the flame

As if incorporate of the same
 In elemental fusion;
 And calm their faces shall burn out
 With a pale and mastering thought,
 And a steadfast looking of desire
 From out between the clefts of fire,—
 While they cry, in the Holy's name,
 To the final Restitution.
 Listen to our loving!

SECOND SEMICHORUS.

So, when the day of God is
 To the thick graves accompted,
 Awaking the dead bodies,
 The angel of the trumpet
 Shall split and shatter the earth
 To the roots of the grave—
 Which never before were slackened—
 And quicken the charnel birth
 With his blast so clear and brave
 That the Dead shall start and stand erect
 And every face of the burial-place
 Shall the awful, single look reflect
 Wherewith he them awakened.
 Listen to our loving!

FIRST SEMICHORUS.

But wild is the horse of Death!
 He will leap up wild at the clamor
 Above and beneath.
 And where is his Tamer
 On that last day,
 When he crieth Ha, ha!
 To the trumpet's blare,
 And paweth the earth's Aceldama?
 When he tosseth his head,
 The drear-white steed,
 And ghastlily champeth the last moon-ray—
 What angel there
 Can lead him away,
 That the living may rule for the Dead?

SECOND SEMICHORUS.

Yet a TAMER shall be found!
 One more bright than seraph crowned,
 And more strong than cherub bold,
 Elder, too, than angel old,
 By his gray eternities.
 He shall master and surprise
 The steed of Death.

For He is strong, and He is fain.
 He shall quell him with a breath,
 And shall lead him where He will,
 With a whisper in the ear,
 Full of fear,
 And a hand upon the mane,
 Grand and still.

FIRST SEMICHORUS.

Through the flats of Hades where the souls assemble
 He will guide the Death-steed calm between their ranks,
 While, like beaten dogs, they a little moan and tremble
 To see the darkness curdle from the horse's glittering flanks.
 Through the flats of Hades where the dreary shade is,
 Up the steep of heaven will the Tamer guide the steed,—
 Up the spheric circles, circle above circle,
 We who count the ages shall count the tolling tread—
 Every hoof-fall striking a blinder blanker sparkle
 From the stony orbs, which shall show as they were dead.

SECOND SEMICHORUS.

All the way the Death-steed with tolling hoofs shall travel,
 Ashen-gray the planets shall be motionless as stones,
 Loosely shall the systems eject their parts coæval,
 Stagnant in the spaces shall float the pallid moons:
 Suns that touch their apogees, reeling from their level,
 Shall run back on their axles, in wild low broken tunes.

CHORUS.

Up against the arches of the crystal ceiling,
 From the horse's nostrils shall stream the blurting breath:
 Up between the angels pale with silent feeling
 Will the Tamer calmly lead the horse of Death.

SEMICHORUS.

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all that glory,

Will the Tamer lead him straightway to the Throne;
 'Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring before Thee,
 With a hand nail-piercèd, I who am thy Son.'
 Then the Eye Divinest, from the Deepest, flaming,
 On the mystic courser shall look out in fire:
 Blind the beast shall stagger where It overcame him,
 Meek as lamb at pasture, bloodless in desire.
 Down the beast shall shiver,—slain amid the taming,—
 And, by Life essential, the phantasm Death expire.

CHORUS.

Listen, man, through life and death,
 Through the dust and through the breath,
 Listen down the heart of things!
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings
 Murmurous with loving.

A VOICE *from below*. Gabriel, thou Gabriell

A VOICE *from above*. What wouldst *thou* with me?

FIRST VOICE. I heard thy voice sound in the angels' song,
 And I would give thee question.

SECOND VOICE. Question me!

FIRST VOICE. Why have I called thrice to my Morning Star
 And had no answer? All the stars are out,
 And answer in their places. Only in vain
 I cast my voice against the outer rays
 Of *my* Star shut in light behind the sun.
 No more reply than from a breaking string,
 Breaking when touched. Or is she *not* my star?
 Where *is* my Star—my Star? Have ye cast down
 Her glory like my glory? Has she waxed
 Mortal, like Adam? Has she learnt to hate
 Like any angel?

SECOND VOICE. She is sad for thee.

All things grow sadder to thee, one by one.

ANGEL CHORUS.

Live, work on, O Earthy!
 By the Actual's tension,
 Speed the arrow worthy
 Of a pure ascension!
 From the low earth round you,
 Reach the heights above you:

From the stripes that wound you,
 Seek the loves that love you!
 God's divinest burneth plain
 Through the crystal diaphane
 Of our loves that love you.

FIRST VOICE. Gabriel, O Gabriell

SECOND VOICE. What wouldst *thou* with me?

FIRST VOICE. Is it true, O thou Gabriel, that the crown
 Of sorrow which I claimed, another claims?
 That HE claims THAT too?

SECOND VOICE. Lost one, it is true.

FIRST VOICE. That HE will be an exile from his heaven,
 To lead those exiles homeward?

SECOND VOICE. It is true.

FIRST VOICE. That HE will be an exile by his will,
 As I by mine election?

SECOND VOICE. It is true.

FIRST VOICE. That I shall stand sole exile finally,—
 Made desolate for fruition?

SECOND VOICE. It is true.

FIRST VOICE. Gabriell

SECOND VOICE. I hearken.

FIRST VOICE. Is it true besides—

Aright true—that mine orient Star will give
 Her name of 'Bright and Morning-Star' to HIM,—
 And take the fairness of his virtue back
 To cover loss and sadness?

SECOND VOICE. It is true.

FIRST VOICE. *Untrue, Untrue!* O Morning Star. O MINE,
 Who sittest secret in a veil of light
 Far up the starry spaces, say—*Untrue!*
 Speak but so loud as doth a wasted moon
 To Tyrrhene waters. I am Lucifer.
A pause. Silence in the stars.
 All things grow sadder to me, one by one.

ANGEL CHORUS.

Exiled human creatures,
 Let your hope grow larger!
 Larger grows the vision
 Of the new delight.

From this chain of Nature's
 God is the Discharger,
 And the Actual's prison
 Opens to your sight.

SEMICHORUS.

Calm the stars and golden
 In a light exceeding:
 What their rays have measured
 Let your feet fulfill
 These are stars beholden
 By your eyes in Eden,
 Yet, across the desert,
 See them shining still!

CHORUS.

Future joy and far light
 Working such relations,
 Hear us singing gently
Exiled is not lost!
 God, above the starlight,
 God, above the patience,
 Shall at last present ye
 Guerdons worth the cost.
 Patiently enduring,
 Painfully surrounded,
 Listen how we love you,
 Hope the uttermost!
 Waiting for that curing
 Which exalts the wounded,
 Hear us sing above you—
 EXILED, BUT NOT LOST!

The stars shine on brightly while ADAM and EVE pursue their way into the far wilderness. There is a sound through the silence, as of the falling tears of an angel.

SONNETS

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION

With stammering lips and insufficient sound
 I strive and struggle to deliver right
 That music of my nature, day and night
 With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
 And inly answering all the senses round
 With octaves of a mystic depth and height
 Which step out grandly to the infinite
 From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
 This song of soul I struggle to outbear
 Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
 And utter all myself into the air:
 But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
 Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
 Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET

The seraph sings before the manifest
 God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,
 And with the full life of consummate Heaven
 Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast
 Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest.
 The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,
 Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven
 For wronging him,—and in the darkness prest
 From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so,
 Sing, seraph with the glory! heaven is high;
 Sing, poet with the sorrow! earth is low:
 The universe's inward voices cry
 'Amen' to either song of joy and woe:
 Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally!

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH BY
B. R. HAYDON

Wordsworth upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. He with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free
Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist:
No portrait this, with Academic air!
This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast,
Upon the fulness of the heart at last
Says no grace after meat. My wine has run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled; yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food:
Dear Christ! when thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS

I have been in the meadows all the day
 And gathered there the nosegay that you see,
 Singing within myself as bird or bee
 When such do field-work on a morn of May.
 But, now I look upon my flowers, decay
 Has met them in my hands more fatally
 Because more warmly clasped,—and sobs are free
 To come instead of songs. What do you say,
 Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
 Back straightway to the fields and gather more?
 Another, sooth, may do it, but not I!
 My heart is very tired, my strength is low,
 My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
 Held dead within them till myself shall die.

TEARS

Thank God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
 More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
 That is light grieving! lighter, none befell
 Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
 Tears! what are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,
 The mother singing; at her marriage-bell
 The bride weeps, and before the oracle
 Of high-faned hills the poet has forgot
 Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
 Ye who weep only! If, as some have done,
 Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
 And touch but tombs,—look up! those tears will run
 Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
 And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

GRIEF

I tell you, hopeless grief is passionless;
 That only men incredulous of despair,
 Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
 Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
 Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness,
 In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare
 Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
 Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
 Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death—
 Most like a monumental statue set
 In everlasting watch and moveless woe
 Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
 Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet:
 If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION

When some belovèd voice that was to you
 Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
 And silence, against which you dare not cry,
 Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
 What hope? what help? what music will undo
 That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh,
 Not reason's subtle count; not melody
 Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew;
 Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales
 Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress-trees
 To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric laws
 Self-chanted, nor the angels' sweet 'All hails,'
 Met in the smile of God: nay, none of these.
 Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill this pause.

COMFORT

Speak low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
 From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low
 Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
 Who art not missed by any that entreat.
 Speak to me as to Mary at thy feet!
 And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
 Let my tears drop like amber while I go
 In reach of thy divinest voice complete
 In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,
 To lose the sense of losing. As a child,
 Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
 Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth
 Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
 He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

Experience, like a pale musician, holds
 A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
 Whence harmonies, we cannot understand,
 Of God's will in his worlds, the strain unfolds
 In sad-perplexèd minors: deathly colds
 Fall on us while we hear, and countermand
 Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land
 With nightingales in visionary wolds.
 We murmur 'Where is any certain tune
 Or measured music in such notes as these?'
 But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
 Are not so minded; their fine ear hath won
 The issue of completed cadences,
 And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

WORK

What are we set on earth for? Say, to toil;
 Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines
 For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
 And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
 God did anoint thee with his odorous oil,
 To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns
 All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
 For younger fellow-workers of the soil
 To wear for amulets. So others shall
 Take patience, labor, to their heart and hand,
 From thy hand and thy heart and thy brave cheer,
 And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
 The least flower with a brimming cup may stand,
 And share its dew-drop with another near.

FUTURITY

And, O belovèd voices, upon which
 Ours passionately call because erelong
 Ye brake off in the middle of that song
 We sang together softly, to enrich
 The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
 The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,
 Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
 The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
 In Heaven to hold our idols; and albeit
 He brake them to our faces and denied
 That our close kisses should impair their white,
 I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
 The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified
 New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
 Like pulses in the Church's brow and breast;
 And by them we find rest in our unrest
 And, heart deep in salt-tears, do yet entreat
 God's fellowship as if on heavenly seat.
 The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
 Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
 And sweetest waters on the record sweet:
 And one is where the Christ, denied and scorned,
 LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render plain,
 By help of having loved a little and mourned,
 That look of sovran love and sovran pain
 Which HE, who could not sin yet suffered, turned
 On him who could reject but not sustain!

THE LOOK

The Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word,
 No gesture of reproach; the Heavens serene
 Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
 Their thunders that way: the forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
 What that look was, none guess; for those who have seen
 Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
 Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
 Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call.
 And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
 'I never knew this man'—did quail and fall
 As knowing straight THAT GOD; and turned free
 And went out speechless from the face of all,
 And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK

I think that look of Christ might seem to say—
 ‘Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone
 Which I at last must break my heart upon,
 For all God’s charge to his high angels may
 Guard my foot better? Did I yesterday
 Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run
 Quick to deny me ’neath the morning sun?
 And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?
 The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
 A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
 For when thy final need is dreariest,
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here;
 My voice to God and angels shall attest,
Because I KNOW this man, let him be clear.’

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

If God compel thee to this destiny,
 To die alone, with none beside thy bed
 To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said
 And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
 Pray then alone, ‘O Christ, come tenderly!
 By thy forsaken Sonship in the red
 Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness outspread,—
 And the lone garden where thine agony
 Fell bloody from thy brow,—by all of those
 Permitted desolations, comfort mine!
 No earthly friend being near me, interpose
 No deathly angel ’twixt my face and thine,
 But stoop Thyself to gather my life’s rose,
 And smile away my mortal to Divine!’

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION

The woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
 A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarole;
 She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
 Far more than of her flax; and yet the reel
 Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
 With quick adjustment, provident control,
 The lines—too subtly twisted to unroll—
 Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
 To the dear Christian Church—that we may do
 Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
 Thus swift and steadfast, thus intent and strong;
 While thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
 Some high calm spheric tune, and prove our work
 The better for the sweetness of our song.

PAIN IN PLEASURE

A thought lay like a flower upon mine heart,
 And drew around it other thoughts like bees
 For multitude and thirst of sweetnesses;
 Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
 Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
 Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
 That I might hive with me such thoughts and please
 My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
 Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I spoke,
 The thought I called a flower grew nettle-rough,
 The thoughts, called bees, stung me to festering:
 Oh, entertain (cried Reason as she woke)
 Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
 And they will all prove sad enough to sting!

AN APPREHENSION

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
 Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
 That still grew gentler till its pulse was less
 For life than pity,—I should yet be slow
 To bring my own heart nakedly below
 The palm of such a friend, that he should press
 Motive, condition, means, appliances,
 My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
 Out full to light and knowledge; I should fear
 Some plait between the brows, some rougher chime
 In the free voice. O angels, let your flood
 Of bitter scorn dash on me! do ye hear
 What *I* say who bear calmly all the time
 This everlasting face to face with God?

DISCONTENT

Light human nature is too lightly tost
 And ruffled without cause, complaining on—
 Restless with rest, until, being overthrown,
 It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
 Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
 Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun
 Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
 A furlong's sigh as if the world were lost.
 But what time through the heart and through the brain
 God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,
 Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
 We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore,
 And hear submissive o'er the stormy main
 God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE

'O dreary life,' we cry, 'O dreary life!
 And still the generations of the birds
 Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
 Serenely live while we are keeping strife
 With Heaven's true purpose in us, as a knife
 Against which we may struggle! Ocean girds
 Unslackened the dry land, savannah-swards
 Unweary sweep, hills watch unworn, and rife
 Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees
 To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass
 In their old glory: O thou God of old,
 Grant me some smaller grace than comes to these!—
 But so much patience as a blade of grass
 Grows by, contented through the heat and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON

I think we are too ready with complaint
 In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
 Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
 Of yon gray blank of sky, we might grow faint
 To muse upon eternity's constraint
 Round our aspirant souls; but since the scope
 Must widen early, is it well to droop,
 For a few days consumed in loss and taint?
 O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted
 And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
 Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
 Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
 To meet the flints? At least it may be said
 'Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God.'

EXAGGERATION

We overstate the ills of life, and take
 Imagination (given us to bring down
 The choirs of singing angels overshadowed
 By God's clear glory) down our earth to rake
 The dismal snows instead, flake following flake,
 To cover all the corn; we walk upon
 The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
 And pant like climbers: near the alder brake
 We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
 Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
 O brothers, let us leave the shame and sin
 Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
 The holy name of GRIEF!—holy herein,
 That by the grief of ONE came all our good.

ADEQUACY

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
 Belovèd England, doth the earth appear
 Quite good enough for men to overbear
 The will of God in, with rebellious wills!
 We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
 Ingloriously its course, nor that the clear
 Strong stars without significance insphere
 Our habitation: we, meantime, our ills
 Heap up against this good and lift a cry
 Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
 As if ourselves were better certainly
 Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
 I ask thee not my joys to multiply,—
 Only to make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND

A DESIRE

Thou large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
 Self-called George Sand! whose soul, amid the lions
 Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance
 And answers roar for roar, as spirits can:
 I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
 Above the applauded circus, in appliance
 Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,
 Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
 From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
 With holier light! that thou to woman's claim
 And man's, mightst join beside the angel's grace
 Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,
 Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace
 To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND

A RECOGNITION

True genius, but true woman! dost deny
 The woman's nature with a manly scorn,
 And break away the gauds and armlets worn
 By weaker women in captivity?
 Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
 Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn,—
 Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn
 Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
 Disproving thy man's name: and while before
 The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
 We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
 Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
 Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore
 Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire!

THE PRISONER

I count the dismal time by months and years
 Since last I felt the green sward under foot,
 And the great breath of all things summer-mute
 Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
 As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres
 Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at. Nature's lute
 Sounds on, behind this door so closely shut,
 A strange wild music to the prisoner's ears,
 Dilated by the distance, till the brain
 Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine:
 While ever, with a visionary pain,
 Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
 Streams, forests, glades, and many a golden train
 Of sunlit hills transfigured to Divine.

INSUFFICIENCY

When I attain to utter forth in verse
 Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
 Along my pulses, yearning to be free
 And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
 To the individual, true, and the universe,
 In consummation of right harmony:
 But, like a wind-exposed distorted tree,
 We are blown against for ever by the curse
 Which breathes through Nature. Oh, the world is weak!
 The effluence of each is false to all,
 And what we best conceive we fail to speak.
 Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall,
 And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
 Fit peroration without let or thrall.

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE

I

A knight of gallant deeds
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine
Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer and told for beads
The dews of the eventide.

II

'O young page,' said the knight,
'A noble page art thou!
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow;
And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,
Didst ward me a mortal blow.'

III

'O brave knight,' said the page,
'Or ere we hither came,
We talked in tent, we talked in field,
Of the bloody battle-game;
But here, below this greenwood bough,
I cannot speak the same.

IV

'Our troop is far behind,
The woodland calm is new;
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs
Tread deep the shadows through;
And, in my mind, some blessing kind
Is dropping with the dew.

V

‘The woodland calm is pure—
 I cannot choose but have
 A thought from these, o’ the beechen-trees,
 Which in our England wave,
 And of the little finches fine
 Which sang there while in Palestine
 The warrior-hilt we drave.

VI

‘Methinks, a moment gone,
 I heard my mother pray!
 I heard, sir knight, the prayer for me
 Wherein she passed away;
 And I know the heavens are leaning down
 To hear what I shall say.’

VII

The page spake calm and high,
 As of no mean degree;
 Perhaps he felt in nature’s broad
 Full heart, his own was free:
 And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
 Then answered smilingly—

VIII

‘Sir page, I pray your grace!
 Certes, I meant not so
 To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,
 With the crook of the battle-bow;
 But a knight may speak of a lady’s face,
 I ween, in any mood or place,
 If the grasses die or grow.

IX

‘And this I meant to say—
 My lady’s face shall shine
 As ladies’ faces use, to greet
 My page from Palestine;
 Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,
 She is no lady of mine.

X

‘And this I meant to fear—
 Her bower may suit thee ill;
 For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
 Thy *talk* was somewhat still:
 And fitter thy hand for my knightly spear
 Than thy tongue for my lady’s will!’

XI

Slowly and thankfully
 The young page bowed his head;
 His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
 Until he blushed instead,
 And no lady in her bower, pardiè,
 Could blush more sudden red:
 ‘Sir Knight,—thy lady’s bower to me
 Is suited well,’ he said.

XII

Beati, beati, mortui!
 From the convent on the sea,
 One mile off, or scarce so nigh,
 Swells the dirge as clear and high
 As if that, over brake and lea,
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of Saint Mary,
 And the fifty tapers burning o’er it,

And the Lady Abbess dead before it,
 And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek
 Her voice did charge and bless,—
 Chanting steady, chanting meek,
 Chanting with a solemn breath,
 Because that they are thinking less
 Upon the dead than upon death.

Beati, beati, mortui!

Now the vision in the sound
 Wheeleth on the wind around;
 Now it sweepeth back, away—
 The uplands will not let it stay
 To dark the western sun:

Mortui!—away at last,—

Or ere the page's blush is past!
 And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

XIII

'A boon, thou noble knight,
 If ever I servèd thee!
 Though thou art a knight and I am a page,
 Now grant a boon to me;
 And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
 If little loved or loved aright
 Be the face of thy ladye.'

XIV

Gloomily looked the knight—
 'As a son thou hast servèd me,
 And would to none I had granted boon
 Except to only thee!
 For haply then I should love aright,
 For then I should know if dark or bright
 Were the face of my ladye.

XV

'Yet it ill suits my knightly tongue
 To grudge that granted boon,
 That heavy price from heart and life
 I paid in silence down;
 The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
 My father's fame: I swear by mine,
 That price was nobly won!

XVI

'Earl Walter was a brave old earl,
 He was my father's friend;
 And while I rode the lists at court
 And little guessed the end,
 My noble father in his shroud
 Against a slanderer lying loud,
 He rose up to defend.

XVII

'Oh, calm below the marble gray
 My father's dust was strown!
 Oh, meek above the marble gray
 His image prayed alonel
 The slanderer lied: the wretch was brave:
 For, looking up the minster-nave,
 He saw my father's knightly glaive
 Was changed from steel to stone.

XVIII

'Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
 With a brave old hand to wear it,
 And dashed the lie back in the mouth
 Which lied against the godly truth
 And against the knightly merit:

The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
 Struck up the dagger in appeal
 From stealthy lie to brutal force—
 And out upon the traitor's corse
 Was yielded the true spirit.

XIX

'I would mine hand had fought that fight
 And justified my father!
 I would mine heart had caught that wound
 And slept beside him rather!
 I think it were a better thing
 Than murdered friend and marriage ring
 Forced on my life together.

XX

'Wail shook Earl Walter's house;
 His true wife shed no tear;
 She lay upon her bed as mute
 As the earl did on his bier:
 Till—"Ride, ride fast," she said at last,
 "And bring the avengèd son anear!
 Ride fast, ride free, as a dart can flee,
 For white of blee with waiting for me
 Is the corse in the next chambère."

XXI

'I came, I knelt beside her bed;
 Her calm was worse than strife:
 "My husband, for thy father dear,
 Gave freely when thou wast not here
 His own and eke my life.
 A boon! Of that sweet child we make
 An orphan for thy father's sake,
 Make thou, for ours, a wife."

XXII

‘I said, “My steed neighs in the court,
 My bark rocks on the brine,
 And the warrior’s vow I am under now
 To free the pilgrim’s shrine;
 But fetch the ring and fetch the priest
 And call that daughter of thine,
 And rule she wide from my castle on Nyde
 While I am in Palestine.”

XXIII

‘In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,
 Ye wis, I could not see,
 But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast prayed,
 And wedded fast were we.
 Her mother smiled upon her bed
 As at its side we knelt to wed,
 And the bride rose from her knee
 And kissed the smile of her mother dead,
 Or ever she kissed me.

XXIV

‘My page, my page, what grieves thee so,
 That the tears run down thy face?’—
 ‘Alas, alas! mine own sistèr
 Was in thy lady’s case:
 But *she* laid down the silks she wore
 And followed him she wed before,
 Disguised as his true servitor,
 To the very battle-place.’

XXV

And wept the page, but laughed the knight,
 A careless laugh laughed he:
 ‘Well done it were for thy sistèr,
 But not for my ladye!

My love, so please you, shall requite
 No woman, whether dark or bright,
 Unwomaned if she be.'

XXVI

The page stopped weeping and smiled cold—
 'Your wisdom may declare
 That womanhood is proved the best
 By golden brooch and glossy vest
 The mincing ladies wear;
 Yet is it proved, and was of old,
 Anear as well, I dare to hold,
 By truth, or by despair.'

XXVII

He smiled no more, he wept no more,
 But passionate he spake—
 'Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,
 When none beside did waken!
 Oh, womanly she paled in fight,
 For one belovèd's sake—
 And her little hand, defiled with blood,
 Her tender tears of womanhood
 Most woman-pure did make!'

XXVIII

—'Well done it were for thy sistèr,
 Thou tellest well her tale!
 But for my lady, she shall pray
 I' the kirk of Nydesdale.
 Not dread for me but love for me
 Shall make my lady pale;
 No casque shall hide her woman's tear—
 It shall have room to trickle clear
 Behind her woman's veil.'

XXIX

—‘But what if she mistook thy mind
 And followed thee to strife,
 Then kneeling did entreat thy love
 As Paynims ask for life?’
 —‘I would forgive, and evermore
 Would love her as my servitor,
 But little as my wife.

XXX

‘Look up—there is a small bright cloud
 Alone amid the skies!
 So high, so pure, and so apart,
 A woman’s honor lies.’
 The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—
 A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
 Betwixt it and his eyes.

XXXI

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
 From welkin unto hill—
 Ha! who rides there?—the page is ’ware,
 Though the cry at his heart is still:
 And the page seeth all and the knight seeth none,
 Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,
 And the Saracens ride at will.

XXXII

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
 ‘Ride fast, my master, ride,
 Or ere within the broadening dark
 The narrow shadows hide.’
 ‘Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,
 And keep thou at my side.’

XXXIII

'Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
 Thy faithful page precede.
 For I must loose on saddle-bow
 My battle-casque that galls, I trow,
 The shoulder of my steed;
 And I must pray, as I did vow,
 For one in bitter need.

XXXIV

'Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
 Now ride, my master, ride!
 Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
 To mortals too beloved to leave,
 I shall be at thy side.'
 The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
 And adown the dell did ride.

XXXV

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
 No smile the word had won;
 Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
 I ween he had never gone:
 Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,
 I ween he had turned anon,
 For dread was the woe in the face so young,
 And wild was the silent geste that flung
 Casque, sword to earth, as the boy down-sprung
 And stood—alone, alone.

XXXVI

He clenched his hands as if to hold
 His soul's great agony—
 'Have I renounced my womanhood,
 For wifehood unto *thee*,

And is this the last, last look of thine
That ever I shall see?

XXXVII

'Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have
A lady to thy mind,
More woman-proud and half as true
As one thou leav'st behind!
And God me take with HIM to dwell—
For HIM I cannot love too well,
As I have loved my kind.'

XXXVIII

She looketh up, in earth's despair,
The hopeful heavens to seek;
That little cloud still floateth there,
Whereof her loved did speak:
How bright the little cloud appears!
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,
And the tears down either cheek.

XXXIX

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
The Paynims round her coming!
The sound and sight have made her calm,—
False page, but truthful woman;
She stands amid them all unmoved:
A heart once broken by the loved
Is strong to meet the foeman.

XL

'Ho, Christian page! art keeping sheep,
From pouring wine-cups resting?'—
'I keep my master's noble name,
For warring, not for feasting;

And if that here Sir Hubert were,
 My master brave, my master dear,
 Ye would not stay the questing.'

XLI

'Where is thy master, scornful page,
 That we may slay or bind him?'—
 'Now search the lea and search the wood,
 And see if ye can find him!
 Nathless, as hath been often tried,
 Your Paynim heroes faster ride
 Before him than behind him.'

XLII

'Give smother answers, lying page,
 Or perish in the lying!'—
 'I trow that if the warrior brand
 Beside my foot, were in my hand,
 'T were better at replying!
 They cursed her deep, they smote her low,
 They cleft her golden ringlets through;
 The Loving is the Dying.

XLIII

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
 And met it from beneath
 With smile more bright in victory
 Than any sword from sheath,—
 Which flashed across her lip serene,
 Most like the spirit-light between
 The darks of life and death.

XLIV

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
 From the convent on the sea,
 Now it sweepeth solemnly,

As over wood and over lea
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of St. Mary,
 And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
 And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
 And the weary nuns with hearts that faintly
 Beat along their voices saintly—

Ingemisco, ingemisco!

Dirge for abbess laid in shroud
 Sweepeth o'er the shroudless dead,
 Page or lady, as we said,
 With the dews upon her head,
 All as sad if not as loud.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!

Is ever a lament begun
 By any mourner under sun,
 Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one*?

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY

FIRST PART

I

'Onora, Onora,'—her mother is calling,
 She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling
 Drop after drop from the sycamores laden
 With dew as with blossom, and calls home the maiden,
 'Night cometh, Onora.'

II

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,
 To the limes at the end where the green arbor is—
 'Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found
 her,
 While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,
 Night cometh—Onora!'

III

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on
 Like the mute minster-aisles when the anthem is done,
 And the choristers sitting with faces aslant
 Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—
 ‘Onora, Onora!’

IV

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
 ‘Onora, art coming?’—what is it she seeth?
 Nought, nought but the gray border-stone that is wist
 To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—
 ‘My daughter!’ Then over

V

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so
 She is ’ware of her little son playing below:
 ‘Now where is Onora?’ He hung down his head
 And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—
 ‘At the tryst with her lover.’

VI

But his mother was wroth: in a sternness quoth she,
 ‘As thou play’st at the ball art thou playing with me?
 When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
 And the saints know above that she loveth but one
 And will ne’er wed another?’

VII

Then the boy wept aloud; ’t was a fair sight yet sad
 To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:
 He stamped with his foot, said—‘The saints know I lied
 Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide:
 Must I utter it, mother?’

VIII

In his vehement childhood he hurried within
 And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin,
 But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
 'Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,
 At nights in the ruin—

IX

'The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,
 Where the owl hoots by day and the toad is sun-proof,
 Where no singing-birds build and the trees gaunt and
 gray
 As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way—
 But is *this* the wind's doing?

X

'A nun in the east wall was buried alive
 Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,
 And shrieked such a curse, as the stone took her breath,
 The old abbess fell backwards and swooned unto death
 With an Ave half-spoken.

XI

'I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
 Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground—
 A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
 And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her
 throat
 In the pass of the Brocken.

XII

'At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there
 With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?
 Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,

What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
At dawn and at even!

XIII

'Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary
And a face turned from heaven?

XIV

'Saint Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile;
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
She whispered—"Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora:
The Tempted is sinning."

XV

'Onora, Onoral' they heard her not coming,
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming;
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning:

XVI

It touches her lips but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes,
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory
Between clouds of amber;

XVII

For the hair droops in clouds amber-colored till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word;

While—O soft!—her speaking is so interwound
Of the dim and the sweet, 't is a twilight of sound
And floats through the chamber.

XVIII

'Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,' said she,
'I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me;
And I know by the hills that the battle is done,
That my lover rides on, will be here with the sun,
'Neath the eyes that behold thee.'

XIX

Her mother sat silent—too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss:
But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-wrought—
'O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought!
If he cometh, who told thee?'

XX

'I know by the hills,' she resumed calm and clear,
'By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear:
Did they ever look so since he bade me adieu?
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true,
As Saint Agnes in sleeping!'

XXI

Half-ashamed and half-softened the boy did not speak,
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek:
She bowed down to kiss him: dear saints, did he see
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY,
That he shrank away weeping?

SECOND PART

A bed. ONORA, sleeping. ANGELS, but not near.

FIRST ANGEL.

Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair?

SECOND ANGEL.

As bodies be.

FIRST ANGEL.

And she so mild?

SECOND ANGEL.

As spirits when

They meeken, not to God, but men.

FIRST ANGEL.

And she so young, that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children, might
Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessèd thing
That at her waking she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep.
How hath she sinned?

SECOND ANGEL.

In bartering love;

God's love for man's.

FIRST ANGEL.

We may reprove

The world for this, not only her:

Let me approach to breathe away

This dust o' the heart with holy air.

SECOND ANGEL.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

FIRST ANGEL.

Did none pray for her?

SECOND ANGEL.

Ay, a child,—

Who never, praying, wept before:

While, in a mother undefiled,

Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true

And pauseless as the pulses do.

FIRST ANGEL.

Then I approach.

SECOND ANGEL.

It is not WILLED.

FIRST ANGEL.

One word: is she redeemed?

SECOND ANGEL.

No more!

The place is filled.

ANGELS *vanish*.

EVIL SPIRIT (*in a Nun's garb by the bed*).

Forbear that dream—forebear that dream! too near to heaven
it leaned.

ONORA (*in sleep*).

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 't is but a dream, sweet
fiend!

EVIL SPIRIT.

It is a *thought*.

ONORA (*in sleep*).

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good:

It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot if it
would.

I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work,

I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the kirk.

EVIL SPIRIT.

Forebear that dream—forebear that dream!

ONORA (*in sleep*).

Nay, let me dream at least.

That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast:

I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,

With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

EVIL SPIRIT.

Forebear that dream—forebear that dream!

ONORA (*in sleep*).

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go:

I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but sol
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirkyard
stone,

Oh, deep and straight! oh, very straight! they move at nights
alone:

And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,
 'Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields
 with me!'

EVIL SPIRIT.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign.

ONORA (*in sleep*).

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied, my word shall answer
 thine.

I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was praying,
 I see the poppies in the corn I used to sport away in:

What shall I do—tread down the dew and pull the blossoms
 blowing?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the
 rowan?

EVIL SPIRIT.

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where thou
 dost stand

Among the fields of Dreamland with thy father hand in
 hand,

And clear and slow repeat the vow, declare its cause and
 kind,

Which not to break, in sleep or wake thou bearest on thy
 mind.

ONORA (*in sleep*).

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause;
 I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong, the spirits laughed ap-
 plause:

The spirits trailed along the pines low laughter like a breeze,
 While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared
 to freeze.

EVIL SPIRIT.

More calm and free, speak out to me why such a vow was
 made.

ONORA (*in sleep*).

Because that God decreed my death and I shrank back
 afraid.

Have patience, O dead father mine! I did not fear to die—
 I wish I were a young dead child and had thy company!
 I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,
 And wearing only a kiss of thine upon my lips that smiled!

The linden-tree that covers thee might so have shadowed
twain,

For death itself I did not fear—'t is love that makes the pain:
Love feareth death. I was no child, I was betrothed that
day;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.
How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,
And feel mine own betrothed go by—alas! no more mine
own—

Go leading by in wedding pomp some lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were
white in grave?

How could I bear to sit in heaven, on e'er so high a throne,
And hear him say to her—to *her!* that else he loveth none?
Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low he
spake,

As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he might
take,

That hers, forsooth, were heavenly eyes—ah me, while very
dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of heaven!) would darken
down to *him!*

EVIL SPIRIT.

Who told thee thou wast called to death?

ONORA (*in sleep*).

I sate all night beside thee:

The gray owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to hide
thee,

And ever he flapped his heavy wing all brokenly and weak,
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his gasping
beak.

I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay
forlorn

Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud in ghastly frag-
ments torn:

And through the night, and through the hush, and over the
flapping wing,

We heard beside the Heavenly Gate the angels murmuring:
We heard them say, 'Put day to day, and count the days to
seven,

And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of heaven.
And yet the Evil ones have leave that purpose to defer,
For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of her.'

EVIL SPIRIT.

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.

ONORA (*in sleep*).

And then I heard thee say—

'I count upon my rosary brown the hours thou hast to stay!
Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by that decree,
Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of thee:
And if thou wilt forgo the sight of angels, verily
Thy true love gazing on thy face shall guess what angels be;
Nor bride shall pass, save thee' . . . Alas!—my father's
hand 's a-cold,

The meadows seem . . .

EVIL SPIRIT.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told.

ONORA (*in sleep*).

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique beads,
By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds,
This rosary brown which is thine own,—lost soul of buried
nun!

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike un-
done,—

I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and, till such vow should
break,

A pledge always of living days 't was hung around my neck—
I vowed to thee on rosary (dead father, look not so!),
I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe.

EVIL SPIRIT.

And canst thou prove . . .

ONORA (*in sleep*).

O love, my love! I felt him near again!

I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the plain!
Was this no weal for me to feel? Is greater weal than this?
Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels heard
but *his*.

EVIL SPIRIT.

Well done, well done!

ONORA (*in sleep*).

Ah me, the sun! the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—
Ah me, how dread can look the Dead! Aroint thee, father
mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs, while she stares through the
night;

There is nought; the great willow, her lattice before,
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor:
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses and, free
From the death-clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARY.

THIRD PART

I

'T is a morn for a bridal; the merry bride-bell
Rings clear through the greenwood that skirts the cha-
pelle,
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside
At the work shall be doing;

II

While down through the wood rides that fair company,
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once
All the maids sigh demurely and think for the nonce,
'And so endeth a wooing!'

III

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say;
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath
When she sigheth or speaketh.

IV

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware
 From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,
 Till in nearing the chapel and glancing before,
 She seeth her little son stand at the door:
 Is it play that he seeketh?

V

Is it play, when his eyes wander innocent-wild
 And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child?
 He trembles not, weeps not; the passion is done,
 And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun
 On his head like a glory.

VI

‘O fair-featured maids, ye are many!’ he cried,
 ‘But in fairness and vileness who matcheth the bride?
 O brave-hearted youths, ye are many! but whom
 For the courage and woe can ye match with the groom
 As ye see them before ye?’

VII

Out spake the bride’s mother, ‘The vileness is thine
 If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrinel’
 Out spake the bride’s lover, ‘The vileness be mine
 If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine
 And the charge be unprovèd.

VIII

‘Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it
 aloud:
 Let thy father and hers hear it deep in his shroud!’
 —‘O father, thou seest, for dead eyes can see,
 How she wears on her bosom a BROWN ROSARY,
 O my father belovèd!’

IX

Then out laughed the bridegroom, and out laughed
 withal
 Both maidens and youths by the old chapel-wall:
 'So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother,' quoth he,
 'She may wear an she listeth a brown rosary,
 Like a pure-hearted lady.'

X

Then swept through the chapel the long bridal train;
 Though he spake to the bride she replied not again;
 On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went
 Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,
 Faint with daylight, but steady.

XI

But her brother had passed in between them and her,
 And calmly knelt down on the high-altar stair—
 Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view
 That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue
 As he would for another.

XII

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white
 That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,
 With a look taken up to each iris of stone
 From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but
 none
 From the face of a mother.

XIII

'In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven
 Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for heaven;
 But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,

Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her instead:
O shrive her and wed not!

XIV

In tears, the bride's mother,—‘Sir priest, unto thee
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair company.’
In wrath, the bride's lover,—‘The lie shall be clear!
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their niches shall hear:
Be the charge proved or said not!’

XV

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,
And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place,—
‘Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN ROSARY!
Is it used for the praying?’

XVI

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—
And the maidens' lips trembled from smiles shut within.
Quoth the priest, ‘Thou art wild, pretty boy! Blessed she
Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary
To a worldly arraying.’

XVII

The bridegroom spake low and led onward the bride
And before the high altar they stood side by side:
The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun,
They have knelt down together to rise up as one.
Who laughed by the altar?

XVIII

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the
sound;

And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,
Gazing cold at the priest without gesture of prayer,
As he read from the psalter.

XIX

The priest never knew that she did so, but still
He felt a power on him too strong for his will:
And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,
His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,
Or the air could not hold it.

XX

'I have sinnèd,' quoth he, 'I have sinnèd, I wot'—
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought:
They dropped fast on the book, but he read on the same,
And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—
As the choristers told it.

XXI

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done
They, who knelt down together, arise up as one:
Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,
But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosary,
No saint at her praying!

XXII

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and wide;
Then suddenly turning he kisseth the bride;
His lips stung her with cold; she glanced upwardly mute:
'Mine own wife,' he said, and fell stark at her foot
In the word he was saying.

XXIII

They have lifted him up, but his head sinks away,
And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine and gray.

Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
 Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor!
 Let his bride gaze upon him.

XXIV

Long and still was her gaze while they chafed him there
 And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her,
 But when they stood up—only *they!* with a start
 The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart:
 She has lived, and forgone him!

XXV

And low on his body she droppeth adown—
 ‘Didst call me thine own wife, belovèd—thine own?
 Then take thine own with thee! thy coldness is warm
 To the world’s cold without thee! Come, keep me from
 harm
 In a calm of thy teaching!’

XXVI

She looked in his face earnest-long, as in sooth
 There were hope of an answer, and then kissed his mouth,
 And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—
 ‘Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!
 God, hear my beseeching!’

XXVII

She was ’ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay,
 She was ’ware of a presence that withered the day:
 Wild she sprang to her feet,—‘I surrender to *thee*
 The broken vow’s pledge, the accursed rosary,—
 I am ready for dying!’

XXVIII

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground
 Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird music-sound
 Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
 As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn
 And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART

Onora looketh listlessly adown the garden walk:
 'I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk.
 I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro,
 Of the steadfast skies above, the running brooks below.
 All things are the same, but I,—only I am dreary,
 And, mother, of my dreariness behold me very weary.

'Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring
 And smiled to think I should smile more upon their
 gathering:
 The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them, dear-
 est mine,
 And carry them and carry me before Saint Agnes' shrine.'
 —Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted in
 the spring,
 And her and them all mournfully to Agnes' shrine did
 bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint and gently shook her
 head—
 'The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*,' she
 said:
 'The little flowers we brought with us, before it we may
 lay,
 For those are used to look at heaven,—but *I* must turn
 away,
 Because no sinner under sun can dare or bear to gaze
 On God's or angel's holiness, except in Jesu's face.'

She spoke with passion after pause—‘And were it wisely
done

If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth
alone?

If we whose virtue is so weak should have a will so strong,
And stand blind on the rocks to choose the right path
from the wrong?

To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, instead of love and
heaven,—

A single rose, for a rose-tree which beareth seven times
seven?

A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the
breast,—

Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the best!’

Then breaking into tears,—‘Dear God,’ she cried, ‘and
must we see

All blissful things depart from us or ere we go to THEE?
We cannot guess Thee in the wood or hear Thee in the
wind?

Our cedars must fall round us ere we see the light be-
hind?

Ay sooth, we feel too strong, in weal, to need Thee on
that road,

But woe being come, the soul is dumb that crieth not on
“God.”’

Her mother could not speak for tears; she ever musèd
thus,

*‘The bees will find out other flowers,—but what is left
for us?’*

But her young brother stayed his sobs and knelt beside
her knee,

—‘Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word
for me?’

She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on his
cheek,

So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers
bloomed no more.

The woman fair who placed it there had died an hour
before.

Both perished mute for lack of root, earth's nourishment
to reach.

O reader, breathe (the ballad saith) some sweetness out
of each!

THE MOURNING MOTHER

(OF THE DEAD BLIND)

I

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,
For thy blind boy in grave?
That no more with each other
Sweet counsel ye can have?
That he, left dark by nature,
Can never more be led
By thee, maternal creature,
Along smooth paths instead?
That thou canst no more show him
The sunshine, by the heat;
The river's silver flowing,
By murmurs at his feet?
The foliage, by its coolness;
The roses, by their smell;
And all creation's fulness,
By Love's invisible?
Weepest thou to behold not
His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorways which were folded,
And prayed against in vain—
And under which, sat smiling
The child-mouth evermore,

As one who watcheth, wiling
 The time by, at a door?
 And weepest thou to feel not
 His clinging hand on thine—
 Which now, at dream-time, will not
 Its cold touch disentwine?
 And weepest thou still oft,
 Oh, never more to mark
 His low soft words, made softer
 By speaking in the dark?
 Weep on, thou mourning mother!

II

But since to him when living,
 Thou wast both sun and moon,
 Look o'er his grave, surviving,
 From a high sphere alone:
 Sustain that exaltation,
 Expand that tender light,
 And hold in mother-passion
 Thy Blessèd in thy sight.
 See how he went out straightway
 From the dark world he knew,—
 No twilight in the gateway
 To mediate 'twixt the two,—
 Into the sudden glory,
 Out of the dark he trod,
 Departing from before thee
 At once to light and God!—
 For the first face, beholding
 The Christ's in its divine,
 For the first place, the golden
 And tideless hyaline,
 With trees at lasting summer
 That rock to songful sound,
 While angels the new-comer
 Wrap a still smile around.
 Oh, in the blessèd psalm now,
 His happy voice he tries,

Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
 Than others, o'er his eyes!
 Yet still, in all the singing,
 Thinks haply of thy song
 Which, in his life's first springing,
 Sang to him all night long;
 And wishes it beside him,
 With kissing lips that cool
 And soft did overglide him,
 To make the sweetness full.
 Look up, O mourning mother!
 Thy blind boy walks in light:
 Ye wait for one another
 Before God's infinite.
 But thou art now the darkest,
 Thou mother left below—
 Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,
 Content that it be so,—
 Until ye two have meeting
 Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
 And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
 As once thou leddest *his*.
 Wait on, thou mourning mother!

A VALEDICTION

God be with thee, my belovèd,—God be with thee!
 Else alone thou goest forth,
 Thy face unto the north,
 Moor and pleasance all around thee and beneath thee
 Looking equal in one snow;
 While I, who try to reach thee,
 Vainly follow, vainly follow
 With the farewell and the hollo,
 And cannot reach thee so.
 Alas, I can but teach thee!
 God be with thee, my belovèd,—God be with thee!

II

Can I teach thee, my belovèd,—can I teach thee?
 If I said, 'Go left or right,'
 The counsel would be light,
 The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich thee;
 My right would show like left;
 My raising would depress thee,
 My choice of light would blind thee,
 Of way—would leave behind thee,
 Of end—would leave bereft.
 Alas, I can but bless thee!
 May God teach thee, my belovèd,—may God teach thee!

III

Can I bless thee, my belovèd,—can I bless thee?
 What blessing word can I
 From mine own tears keep dry?
 What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress thee?
 My good reverts to ill;
 My calmnesses would move thee,
 My softnesses would prick thee,
 My bindings up would break thee,
 My crownings curse and kill.
 Alas, I can but love thee!
 May God bless thee, my belovèd,—may God bless thee!

IV

Can I love thee, my belovèd,—can I love thee?
 And is *this* like love, to stand
 With no help in my hand,
 When strong as death I fain would watch above thee?
 My love-kiss can deny
 No tear that falls beneath it;
 Mine oath of love can swear thee
 From no ill that comes near thee,
 And thou diest while I breathe it,
 And I—I can but die!
 May God love thee, my belovèd,—may God love thee!

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE

A Poet writes to his Friend. PLACE—A Room in Wycombe Hall. TIME—Late in the evening.

I

Dear my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit
 o'er you!
 Down the purple of this chamber tears should scarcely run
 at will.
 I am humbled who was humble. Friend, I bow my head before
 you:
 You should lead me to my peasants, but their faces are too still.

II

There's a lady, an earl's daughter,—she is proud and she is
 noble,
 And she treads the crimson carpet and she breathes the per-
 fumed air,
 And a kingly blood sends glances up, her princely eye to
 trouble,
 And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her hair.

III

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles by the
 breakers,
 She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten and com-
 mand:
 And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her acres,
 As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of the land.

IV

There are none of England's daughters who can show a
 prouder presence;
 Upon princely suitors' praying she has looked in her disdain.
 She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English
 peasants;
 What was *I* that I should love her, save for competence to
 pain?

V

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
 As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other
 things.
 Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abase-
 ment,
 In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings!

VI

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps their
 doorways;
 She has blessed their little children, as a priest or queen were
 she:
 Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
 For I thought it was the same smile which she used to smile on
me.

VII

She has voters in the Commons, she has lovers in the palace,
 And, of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine;
 Oft the Prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine and
 the chalice:
 Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my beloved, my Geraldine!

VIII

Yet I could not choose but love her: I was born to poet-uses,
 To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.
 Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the
 Muses;
 And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

IX

And because I was a poet, and because the public praised me,
 With a critical deduction for the modern writer's fault,
 I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies that
 raised me,
 Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the salt.

X

And they praised me in her presence—'Will your book appear
 this summer?'
 Then returning to each other—'Yes, our plans are for the
 moors.'
 Then with whisper dropped behind me—"There he is! the latest
 comer.
 Oh, she only likes his verses! what is over, she endures.

XI

'Quite low-born, self-educated! somewhat gifted though by
 nature,
 And we make a point of asking him,—of being very kind.
 You may speak, he does not hear you! and, besides, he writes
 no satire,—
 All these serpents kept by charmers leave the natural sting
 behind.'

XII

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among
 them,
 Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorched
 my brow;

When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, over-rung
 them,
 And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature through.

XIII

I looked upward and beheld her: with a calm and regnant
 spirit,
 Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before them
 all—
 'Have you such superfluous honor, sir, that able to confer it
 You will come down, Mister Bertram, as my guest to Wy-
 combe Hall?'

XIV

Here she paused; she had been paler at the first word of her
 speaking,
 But, because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat, as for
 shame:
 Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—'I am
 seeking
 More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my
 claim.

XV

'Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman,'
 (Here her smile sprang like a fountain and, so, overflowed her
 mouth)
 'But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at
 gloaming
 Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

XVI

'I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—
 Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the
 thrushes first:
 And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,
 I will thank you for the woodlands,—for the human world, at
 worst.'

XVII

Then she smiled around right childly, then she gazed around
 right queenly,
 And I bowed—I could not answer; alternated light and gloom—
 While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,
 She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the
 room.

XVIII

Oh, the blessèd woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around
 me,
 With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind!
 Oh, the cursèd woods of Sussex! where the hunter's arrow
 found me,
 When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and
 blind!

XIX

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the numerous guests
 invited,
 And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet;
 And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly
 freighted
 All the air about the windows with elastic laughter sweet.

XX

For at eve the open windows flung their light out on the terrace
 Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadow
 sweep,
 While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress,
 Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music in
 their sleep.

XXI

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing,
 Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the dark;
 But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight's
 ringing,
 And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the
 park.

XXII

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-
 corded speeches
 To commix my words and laughter with the converse and the
 jest,
 Oft I sat apart and, gazing on the river through the beeches,
 Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice o'er-
 float the rest.

XXIII

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed and laugh of
 rider,
 Spread out cheery from the courtyard till we lost them in the
 hills,
 While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside her,
 Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels and
 abeles.

XXIV

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass, bareheaded, with
 the flowing
 Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her throat,
 And the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by her
 going,
 And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to float,—

XXV

With a bunch of dewy maple, which her right hand held above
 her,
 And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and the
 skies,
 As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love
 her,
 And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her eyes.

XXVI

For her eyes alone smile constantly; her lips have serious
 sweetness,
 And her front is calm, the dimple rarely ripples on the cheek;
 But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in discreet-
 ness
 Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not care to speak.

XXVII

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the garden,
 And I walked among her noble friends and could not keep
 behind.
 Spake she unto all and unto me—'Behold, I am the warden
 Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to their
 mind.

XXVIII

'But within this swarded circle into which the lime-walk brings
 us,
 Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in reverent
 fear,
 I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us
 Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to
 hear.

XXIX

'The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender jet of water
 Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint:
 Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping (Lough the sculptor
 wrought her),
 So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush!—a fancy quaint.

XXX

'Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them
 lingers;
 And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the
 cheek:
 While the right hand,—with the symbol-rose held slack within
 the fingers,—
 Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not
 speak!

XXXI

'That the essential meaning growing may exceed the special
 symbol,
 Is the thought as I conceive it: it applies more high and low.
 Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow
 humble,
 And assert an inward honor by denying outward show.'

XXXII

Nay, your Silence,' said I, 'truly, holds her symbol-rose but
 slackly,
 Yet *she holds it*, or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken:
 And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk
 blackly
 In the presence of the social law as mere ignoble men.

XXXIII

'Let the poets dream such dreaming! madam, in these British
islands

'T is the substance that wanes ever, 't is the symbol that ex-
ceeds.

Soon we shall have nought but symbol: and, for statues like
this Silence,

Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the weed's.'

XXXIV

'Not so quickly,' she retorted,—'I confess, where'er you go, you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for
honor clear:

But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book which now reads dryly, and sit down with
Silence here.'

XXXV

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indigna-
tion;

Friends, who listened, laughed her words off, while her lover
deemed her fair:

A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny
air!

XXXVI

With the trees round, not so distant but you heard their verna-
l murmur,

And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward
move,

And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be
warmer,

Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light above

XXXVII

'T is a picture for remembrance. And thus, morning after
 morning,
 Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet.
 Why, her greyhound followed also! dogs—we both were dogs
 for scorning—
 To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay through
 the wheat.

XXXVIII

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite of
 sorrow,
 Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed
 along,—
 Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns to-
 morrow,
 Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a song.

XXXIX

Ay, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down in the
 gowans,
 With the forest green behind us and its shadow cast before,
 And the river running under, and across it from the rowans
 A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it bore,—

XL

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
 Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of our
 own;
 Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or the subtle interflowings
 Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here 's the book, the leaf is folded
 down!

XLI

Or at times a modern volume, Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted
 idyl,
 Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
 Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate,' which, if cut deep
 down the middle,
 Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.

XLII

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my
 making:
 Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth,
 For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you are
 speaking,
 And the chariot wheels jar in the gate through which you drive
 them forth.

XLIII

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round us
 flinging
 A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the
 breast,
 She would break out on a sudden in a gush of woodland sing-
 ing,
 Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

XLIV

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce I know which is divinest,
 For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on the tune,
 And her mouth stirs with the song, like song; and when the
 notes are finest,
 'T is the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell them
 on.

XLV

Then we talked—oh, how we talked! her voice, so cadenced in
the talking,
Made another singing—of the soul! a music without bars:
While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where
we were walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about the stars.

XLVI

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always
thought them;
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on branch,
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought
them,
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the grange.

XLVII

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she speaks
lightly,
Has a grace in being gay which even mournful souls approve,
For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck so
rightly
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

XLVIII

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather! upon all things, sub-
stance, shadow,
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses, of the reapers in the
corn,
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through
the meadow,
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its
scorn.

XLIX

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature,
 And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear;
 So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature,
 Yet will lift the cry of 'progress,' as it trod from sphere to
 sphere.

L

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—'The Age culls
 simples,
 With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the
 stars.
 We are gods by our own reck'ning, and may well shut up the
 temples,
 And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars.

LI

'For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
 With, at every mile run faster,—“O the wondrous wondrous
 age!”
 Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron,
 Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

LII

'Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep resources
 But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright without
 banel
 When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestic white
 horses,
 Are we greater than the first men who led black ones by the
 mane?

LIII

'If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,
 If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric breath,

'T were but power within our tether, no new spirit-power com-
prising,
And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death.'

LIV

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her, loved her
certes
As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands;
As I loved pure inspirations, loved the graces, loved the virtues,
In a Love content with writing his own name on desert sands.

LV

Or at least I thought so, purely; thought no idiot Hope was
raising
Any crown to crown Love's silence, silent Love that sate alone:
Out, alas! the stag is like me, he that tries to go on grazing
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with
sudden moan.

LVI

It was thus I reeled. I told you that her hand had many suitors;
But she smiles them down imperially as Venus did the waves,
And with such a gracious coldness that they cannot press their
futures
On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

LVII

And this morning as I sat alone within the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought
serene,
For I had been reading Camoëns, that poem you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in as the sweetest ever seen.

LVIII

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking
from it

A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,
 As the branch of a green osier, when a child would overcome it,
 Springs up freely from his claspings and goes swinging in the
 sun.

LIX

As I mused I heard a murmur; it grew deep as it grew longer,
 Speakers using earnest language—'Lady Geraldine, you *would!*'
 And I heard a voice that pleaded, ever on in accents stronger,
 As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good.

LX

Well I knew that voice; it was an earl's, of soul that matched
 his station,
 Soul completed into lordship, might and right read on his
 brow;
 Very finely courteous; far too proud to doubt his domination
 Of the common people, he atones for grandeur by a bow.

LXI

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes of less
 expression
 Than resistance, coldly casting off the looks of other men,
 As steel, arrows; unelastic lips which seem to taste possession
 And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distract.

LXII

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing by his
 order
 With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of art and letters too;
 Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks that
 border
 A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

LXIII

Thus, I knew that voice, I heard it, and I could not help the
hearkening:

In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses till they ran on all sides
darkening,

And scorched, weighed like melted metal round my feet that
stood therein.

LXIV

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake, for wealth,
position,

For the sake of liberal uses and great actions to be done:

And she interrupted gently, 'Nay, my lord, the old tradition
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is, should
be won.'

LXV

'Ah, that white hand!' he said quickly,—and in his he either
drew it

Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied,

'Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best es-
chew it

And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to decide.'

LXVI

What he said again, I know not: it is likely that his trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow
scorn,

'And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry shall be
noble,

Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was born.'

LXVII

There, I maddened! her words stung me. Life swept through
 me into fever,
 And my soul sprang up astonished, sprang full-statured in an
 hour.

Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
 To a Pythian height dilates you, and despair sublimates to
 power?

LXVIII

From my brain the soul-wings budded, waved a flame about
 my body,
 Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn out, as
 man,
 From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow
 ruddy
 With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits can.

LXIX

I was mad, inspired—say either! (anguish worketh inspiration)
 Was a man or beast—perhaps so, for the tiger roars when
 speared;
 And I walked on, step by step along the level of my passion—
 Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never
 feared.

LXX

He had left her, peradventure, when my footstep proved my
 coming,
 But for *her*—she half arose, then sate, grew scarlet and grew
 pale.
 Oh, she trembled! 't is so always with a worldly man or woman
 In the presence of true spirits; what else *can* they do but quail?

LXXI

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest brothers
Far too strong for it; then drooping, bowed her face upon her
hands;

And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and
others:

I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my
sands.

LXXII

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though leaf-
verdant,

Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purple and
the gold,

All the 'landed stakes' and lordships, all that spirits pure and
ardent

Are cast out of love and honor because chancing not to hold.

LXXIII

'For myself I do not argue,' said I, 'though I love you, madam,
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have
trod:

And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

LXXIV

'Yet, O God,' I said, 'O grave,' I said, 'O mother's heart and
bosom,

With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little
child!

We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-
closing;

We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled.

LXXV

'Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or wealth—*that*
needs no learning:
That comes quickly, quick as sin does, ay, and culminates to
sin;
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 't is a clay above your
scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling breath
within.

LXXVI

'What right have you, madam, gazing your palace mirror
daily,
Getting so by heart your beauty which all others must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to vow
gaily
You will wed no man that 's only good to God, and nothing
more?

LXXVII

'Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God, the
sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned, with your lovely spirit-face
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so
human,
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to
grace,—

LXXVIII

'What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn, despise,
revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men, for-
sooth,—
As mere Pariahs of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them
In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness of your
mouth?

LXXIX

'Have you any answer, madam? If my spirit were less earthly,
 If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string,
 I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold me! I am
 worthy
 Of thy loving, for I love thee. I am worthy as a king.

LXXX

'As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain upon
 her,
 That I, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you
 again,
 Love you, madam, dare to love you, to my grief and your
 dishonor,
 To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain!'

LXXXI

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I need not
 write them fuller,
 For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of
 tears.
 Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! why, a beast had scarce
 been duller
 Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the
 spheres.

LXXXII

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with
 thunder
 Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up like a
 call.
 Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked up, as if in
 wonder,
 With tears beaded on her lashes, and said—'Bertram!—It was
 all.

LXXXIII

If she had cursed me, and she might have, or if even, with
 queenly bearing
 Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and said,
 'Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a full
 hearing:
 Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less,
 instead!'

LXXXIV

I had borne it: but that 'Bertram'—why, it lies there on the
 paper
 A mere word, without her accent, and you cannot judge the
 weight
 Of the calm which crushed my passion: I seemed drowning
 in a vapor;
 And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn made deso-
 late.

LXXXV

So, struck backward and exhausted by that inward flow of
 passion
 Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of abstract
 truth,
 By a logic agonizing through unseemly demonstration,
 And by youth's own anguish turning grimly gray the hairs of
 youth,—

LXXXVI

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake wisely
 I spake basely—using truth, if what I spake indeed was true,
 To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there weighing
 nicely
 A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I could
 do!—

LXXXVII

By such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and occasioned,—
 As a wild horse through a city runs with lightning in his eyes,
 And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall, impassioned,
 Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly drops and dies—

LXXXVIII

So I fell, struck down before her—do you blame me, friend,
 for weakness?
 'T was my strength of passion slew me!—fell before her like a stone;
 Fast the dreadful world rolled from me on its roaring wheels
 of blackness:
 When the light came I was lying in this chamber and alone.

LXXXIX

Oh, of course she charged her lacqueys to bear out the sickly burden,
 And to cast it from her scornful sight, but not *beyond* the gate;
 She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
 Such a man as I; 't were something to be level to her hate.

XC

But for me—you now are conscious why, my friend, I write this letter,
 How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life undone.
 I shall leave her house at dawn; I would to-night, if I were better—
 And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the sun.

XCI

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart, with no last gazes,
 No weak moanings (one word only, left in writing for her
 hands),
 Out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing praises,
 To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands.

XCII

Blame me not. I would not squander life in grief—I am ab-
 stemious.
 I but nurse my spirit's falcon that its wing may soar again.
 There 's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes of a
 Phemius:
 Into work the poet kneads them, and he does not die *till then*.

CONCLUSION

I

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
 Still in hot and heavy splashes fell the tears on every leaf.
 Having ended, he leans backward in his chair, with lips that
 quiver
 From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts of
 grief.

II

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'T is a dream—a dream of
 mercies!
 'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains how she standeth still and
 pale!
 'T is a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-curses,
 Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

III

'Eyes,' he said, 'now throbbing through me! are ye eyes that
did undo me?

Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead are ye ever burning
torrid

O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?'

IV

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air the purple curtain
Swellleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows,
While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant
repose.

V

Said he—'Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there
steady!

Now I see it plainly, plainly now I cannot hope or doubt—
There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of silent
passion,

Curvèd like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows out.'

VI

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured
pace;

With her two white hands extended as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication gazing earnest in his face.

VII

Said he—'Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or stir of
vesture!

Let the blessèd apparition melt not yet to its divine!

No approaching—hush, no breathing! or my heart must swoon
to death in

The too utter life thou bringest, O thou dream of Geraldine!

VIII

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes and tenderly:—
'Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a one as I?'

IX

Said he—'I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea!
So, thou vision of all sweetness, princely to a full completeness
Would my heart and life flow onward, deathward, through this
dream of THEE!

X

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her
cheeks;

Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly
told him,

'Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 't is the vision only speaks.'

XI

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before
her,

And she whispered low in triumph, 'It shall be as I have sworn.

Very rich he is in virtues, very noble—noble, certes;

And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born.'

A VISION OF POETS

'O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
How may I lightly stile thy great power?

Echo. *Power.*

Power! but of whence? under the greenwood spraye?
Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.

Echo. In Heavens aye.

In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne
By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine?

Echo. By paine.

Show me the paine, it shall be undergone:
I to mine end will still go on.

Echo. Go on.'

—*Britannia's Pastorals.*

A poet could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night.

And thus he rose disquieted
With sweet rhymes ringing through his head,
And in the forest wanderèd

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
The moon had drawn long colonnades
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver: pavement fair,
The antique wood-nymphs scarce would dare
To foot-print o'er, had such been there,

And rather sit by breathlessly,
With fear in their large eyes, to see
The consecrated sight. But HE—

The poet who, with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore
A beauty passing the earth's store,—
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
Like a babe's hand without intent
Drawn down a seven-stringed instrument:

Nor jarred it with his humor as,
With a faint stirring of the grass,
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,
But all things fair and strange did chime
With his thoughts then, as rhyme to rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,
Alighted from heaven's burning rim
To breathe from glory in the Dim;

Much less a lady riding slow
Upon a palfrey white as snow,
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,
'What ho, sir poet! dost thou pace
Our woods at night in ghostly chase

'Of some fair Dryad of old tales
Who chants between the nightingales
And over sleep by song prevails?'

She smiled; but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone. 'Now, nay,'
He answered, 'slumber passed away,

'Compelled by instincts in my head
That I should see to-night, instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread.'

She looked up quickly to the sky
And spake: 'The moon's regality
Will hear no praise; She is as I.

'She is in heaven, and I on earth;
This is my kingdom: I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.'

He brake in with a voice that mourned;
'To their worth, lady? They are scorned
By men they sing for, till inurned.

'To their worth? Beauty in the mind
Leaves the hearth cold, and love-refined
Ambitions make the world unkind.

'The boor who ploughs the daisy down,
The chief whose mortgage of renown,
Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

'Both these are happier, more approved
Than poets!—why should I be moved
In saying, both are more beloved?'

'The south can judge not of the north,'
She resumed calmly; 'I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

'Yea, verily, to anoint them all
With blessèd oils which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall.'

'As sweet,' the poet said, and run
A low sad laugh, 'as flowers are, sprung
Out of their graves when they die young;

'As sweet as window-eglantine,
Some bough of which, as they decline,
The hired nurse gathers at their sign:

'As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud
Which the gay Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats, singing aloud.'

The lady answered, 'Yea, as sweet!
The things thou namest being complete
In fragrance, as I measure it.

'Since sweet the death-clothes and the knell
Of him who having lived, dies well;
And wholly sweet the asphodel

'Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is,
Into the world of souls, from this.

'Since sweet the tears, dropped at the door
Of tearless Death, and even before:
Sweet, consecrated evermore.

'What, dost thou judge it a strange thing
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,
Should bear some dust from out the ring?

'Come on with me, come on with me,
And learn in coming: let me free
Thy spirit into verity.'

She ceased: her palfrey's paces sent
No separate noises as she went;
'T was a bee's hum, a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowsy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did far and spare
O'erswim the masses everywhere;

Save when the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon shines

A broader glory. You may see
The trees grow rarer presently;
The air blows up more fresh and free:

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large heaven-heart, bare with night,

A fiery throb in every star,
Those burning arteries that are
The conduits of God's life afar,—

A wild brown moorland underneath,
And four pools breaking up the heath
With white low gleamings, blank as death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood;

Since thunder-stricken, years ago,
Fixed in the spectral strain and throe
Wherewith it struggled from the blow:

A monumental tree, alone,
That will not bend in storms, nor groan,
But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
Upon the pool where, javelin-like,
The star-rays quiver while they strike.

'Drink,' said the lady, very still—
 'Be holy and cold.' He did her will
 And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto
 Was bare of trees; there, only grew
 Straight flags, and lilies just a few

Which sullen on the water sate
 And leant their faces on the flat,
 As weary of the starlight-state.

'Drink,' said the lady, grave and slow—
 '*World's use* behoveth thee to know.'
 He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes
 And flaunting weeds and reeds and rushes
 That winds sang through in mournful gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
 By a slow slime; the starlight swound
 Over the ghastly light it found.

'Drink,' said the lady, sad and slow—
 '*World's love* behoveth thee to know.'
 He looked to her commanding so;

Her brow was troubled, but her eye
 Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
 He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
 Beside the fourth pool and the last,
 Where weights of shadow were downcast

From yew and alder and rank trails
 Of nightshade clasping the trunk-scales
 And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew: who dares to stoop
Where those dank branches overdroop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up;

He hears a silent gliding coil,
The snakes strain hard against the soil,
His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats but dimly scanned
Full in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek:
'Must I drink *here?*' he seemed to seek
The lady's will with utterance meek:

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'it so must be;
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
'Behoves thee know *World's cruelty.*'

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloath
As if from rivers of the south;

His lips sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like, rose and sank,

And he swooned backward to a dream
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,
With Death and Life at each extreme:

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
 Did crown his forehead after this;
 His eyelids flew back for the bliss—

The lady stood beside his head,
 Smiling a thought, with hair dispread;
 The moonshine seemed dishevellèd

In her sleek tresses manifold
 Like Danae's in the rain of old
 That dripped with melancholy gold:

But SHE was holy, pale and high
 As one who saw an ecstasy
 Beyond a foretold agony.

'Rise up!' said she with voice where song
 Eddied through speech, 'rise up; be strong:
 And learn how right avenges wrong.'

The poet rose up on his feet:
 He stood before an altar set
 For sacrament with vessels meet

And mystic altar-lights which shine
 As if their flames were crystalline
 Carved flames that would not shrink or pine.

The altar filled the central place
 Of a great church, and toward its face
 Long aisles did shoot and interlace,

And from it a continuous mist
 Of incense (round the edges kissed
 By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
 Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
 Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the archèd roof
 And thence refracting eddied off
 And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,
 Then, poising its white masses brave,
 Swept solemnly down aisle and nave

Where, now in dark and now in light,
 The countless columns, glimmering white,
 Seemed leading out to the Infinite:

Plunged halfway up the shaft, they showed
 In that pale shifting incense-cloud
 Which flowed them by and overflowed

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,
 And the whole temple, at the end,
 With its own incense to distend,—

The arches like a giant's bow
 To bend and slacken,—and below,
 The nichèd saints to come and go:

Alone amid the shifting scene
 That central altar stood serene
 In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
 Of a chief angel standing there
 Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
 That *they* saw God; his lips and jaw
 Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's Law

They could enunciate and refrain
 From vibratory after-pain,
 And his brow's height was sovereign.

On the vast background of his wings
Rises his image, and he flings
From each plumed arc pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth, more
Or less, the angel-heart) before
And round him upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes,
While at his side 'twixt lights and glooms
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left-way bent,
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar; pale and bound
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot nor to forget:

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified,

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirits seemed to sink in him—
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current: these were poets true,
 Who died for Beauty as martyrs do
 For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
 These poets were; of iron rule,
 The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here Homer, with a broad suspense
 Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
 Of garrulous god-innocence.

There Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb
 The crowns o' the world: O eyes sublime
 With tears and laughters for all time!

Here Æschylus, the women swooned
 To see so awful, when he frowned
 As the gods did: he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
 Scholastic lips, that could be wild
 And laugh or sob out like a child

Even in the classes. Sophocles,
 With that king's-look which down the trees
 Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,
 Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,
 Cared most for gods and bulls. And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
 With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear
 Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
 To hurtle past it in his soul.
 And Sappho, with that gloriole

Of ebon hair on calmèd brows—
 O poet-woman! none foregoes
 The leap, attaining the repose.

Theocritus, with glittering locks
 Dropped sideways, as betwixt the rocks
 He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took
 The world with mirth, and laughter-struck
 The hollow caves of Thought and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.
 And Virgil: shade of Mantuan beech
 Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high:
 For his gods wore less majesty
 Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius, nobler than his mood,
 Who dropped his plummet down the broad
 Deep universe and said 'No God—'

Finding no bottom: he denied
 Divinely the divine, and died
 Chief poet on the Tiber-side

By grace of God: his face is stern
 As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
 To teach a truth he would not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed;
 Once counted greater than the rest,
 When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
 (With languid sleep-smile you had said
 From his own verse engenderèd)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
 Their curls in one: the Italian
 Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
 And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
 For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri; and fancy-willed
 Boiardo, who with laughter filled
 The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
 To sleek that storm. And, not without
 The wreath he died in and the doubt

He died by, Tasso, bard and lover,
 Whose visions were too thin to cover
 The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine; and grave Corneille,
 The orator of rhymes, whose wail
 Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch pale,

From whose brain-lighted heart were thrown
 A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
 Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
 Compelling India's Genius sad
 From the wave through the Lusiad,—

The murmurs of the storm-cape ocean
 Indrawn in vibrative emotion
 Along the verse. And, while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
 Under the tonsure blown upon
 By airs celestial, Calderon.

And bold De Vega, who breathed quick
Verse after verse, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetoric.

And Goethe, with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon 't,
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine;
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim:
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonair
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne, with smiles they drew
From outward nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben,
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows when
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes: deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue-blind. And Keats the real
Adonis with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and sheen
In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron, sad as grave
And salt as life; forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and many more)
The lighted altar looming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar:

And all their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless rule.

All, still as stone and yet intense;
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone were carved and not by sense.

But where the heart of each should beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to their feet

Drop after drop—dropped heavily
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady—and her word
Came distant, as wide waves were stirred
Between her and the ear that heard,—

*'World's use is cold, world's love is vain,
World's cruelty is bitter bane,
But pain is not the fruit of pain.*

'Hearken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood: dismissing dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead.

'His organ's clavier strikes along
These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,
They gave him without count of wrong,—

'A diapason whence to guide
Up to God's feet, from these who died,
An anthem fully glorified—

'Whereat God's blessing, IBARAK (יְבָרַךְ)
Breathes back this music, folds it back
About the earth in vapory rack,

'And men walk in it, crying "Lo
The world is wider, and we know
The very heavens look brighter so:

"The stars move statelier round the edge
Of the silver spheres, and give in pledge
Their light for nobler privilege:

"No little flower but joys or grieves,
Full life is rustling in the sheaves,
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves."

'So works this music on the earth,
God so admits it, sends it forth
To add another worth to worth—

'A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

'Now hearken!' then the poet gazed
Upon the angel glorious-faced
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences:

Then rose and fell (with swell and swoond
Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys: the tones were mixed,
Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbb'd betwixt
The incomplete and the unfixed:

And therein mighty minds were heard
In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word:

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,

A Harmony that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument,

Up, upward like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,
And rises in apocalypse:

A Harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplex'd chords, and soared at once
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves as
It passed to God. The music was
Of divine stature; strong to pass:

And those who heard it, understood
 Something of life in spirit and blood,
 Something of nature's fair and good:

And while it sounded, those great souls
 Did thrill as racers at the goals
 And burn in all their aureoles;

But she the lady, as vapor-bound,
 Stood calmly in the joy of sound,
 Like Nature with the showers around:

And when it ceased, the blood which fell
 Again, alone grew audible,
 Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
 His hand, and spake out sovranly:
 'Tried poets, hearken and reply!

'Give me true answers. If we grant
 That not to suffer, is to want
 The conscience of the jubilant,—

'If ignorance of anguish is
 But ignorance, and mortals miss
 Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

'If, as two colors must be viewed
 In a visible image, mortals should
 Need good and evil, to see good,—

'If to speak nobly, comprehends
 To feel profoundly,—if the ends
 Of power and suffering, Nature blends,—

'If poets on the tripod must
 Writhe like the Pythian to make just
 Their oracles and merit trust,—

'If every vatic word that sweeps
To change the world must pale their lips
And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

'If to search deep the universe
Must pierce the searcher with the curse,
Because that bolt (in man's reverse)

'Was shot to the heart o' the wood and lies
Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes
That look for visions and surprise

'From influent angels, must shut down
Their eyelids first to sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone,—

'If ONE who did redeem you back,
By His own loss, from final wrack,
Did consecrate by touch and track

'Those temporal sorrows till the taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropped too fast,—

'If all the crowns of earth must wound
With prickings of the thorns He found,—
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

'What say ye unto this?—refuse
This baptism in salt water?—choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labor loose?

'Or, O ye gifted givers! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me
To make the world this harmony,

'Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help?'

The Spirits bent

Their awful brows and said 'Content.'

Content! it sounded like *Amen*
 Said by a choir of mourning men;
 An affirmation full of pain

And patience,—ay, of glorying
 And adoration, as a king
 Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
 Lightened abroad until the place
 Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
 And nave and transept, columns white
 And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off and all
 Stood in the noon-sun,—‘Lo, I call
 To other hearts as liberal.

‘This pedal strikes out in the air:
 My instrument has room to bear
 Still fuller strains and perfecter.

‘Herein is room, and shall be room
 While Time lasts, for new hearts to come
 Consummating while they consume.

‘What living man will bring a gift
 Of his own heart and help to lift
 The tune?—The race is to the swift.’

So asked the angel. Straight the while,
 A company came up the aisle
 With measured step and sorted smile;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
 With winking unaccustomed eyes
 And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest
 As if the world were dispossessed,
 And one did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid, an as he should faint;
 One shook his curls across his paint
 And moralized on worldly taint;

One, slanting up his face, did wink
 The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
 To think—O gods! or—not to think.

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
 As if the sun would fall in snow
 If they walked to instead of fro;

And some, with conscious ambling free,
 Did shake their bells right daintily
 On hand and foot, for harmony;

And some, composing sudden sighs
 In attitudes of point-device,
 Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
 The spirits crowned, it might appear
 Submitted to a ghastly fear;

As a sane eye in master-passion
 Constrains a maniac to the fashion
 Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
 O' the lid, the wrinkling of the brow,
 Exaggerate with mock and mow,—

So mastered was that company
 By the crowned vision utterly,
 Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
 With Homer's forehead, though he lacked
 An inch of any; and one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,
 As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
 Were pent behind it; one his smooth

Pink cheeks did rumple passionate
 Like Æschylus, and tried to prate
 On trolling tongue of fate and fate;

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
 Any light woman's; one forbore
 Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
 His hard-shut lips; and one that drew
 Sour humors from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
 Of most unnatural jollities,
 Because Anacreon looked jest-wise;

So with the rest: it was a sight
 A great world-laughter would requite,
 Or great world-wrath, with equal right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd
 To speak for all, in sleek and proud
 Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel—"Thus,
 O angel who hast called for us,
 We bring thee service emulous.

'Fit service from sufficient soul,
 Hand-service to receive world's dole,
 Lip-service in world's ear to roll

'Adjusted concords—soft enow
To hear the wine-cups passing, through,
And not too grave to spoil the show:

'Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel, leanest o'er
The window-sill of metaphor.

'To give our hearts up? fie! that rage
Barbaric antedates the age;
It is not done on any stage.

'Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back,—must ours be bent?

'We are not pilgrims, by your leave;
No, nor yet martyrs; if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to—summer eve:

'And if we labor, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie.'

More yet that speaker would have said,
Poising between his smiles fair-fed
Each separate phrase till finishèd;

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them worn,

Ay, jetted such brave fire that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely: they had passed.

And he our pilgrim-poet saw
 Only their places, in deep awe,
 What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
 The angel in the angel shone,
 Revealing glory in benison;

Till, ripened in the light which shut
 The poet in, his spirit mute
 Dropped sudden as a perfect fruit:

He fell before the angel's feet,
 Saying, 'If what is true is sweet,
 In something I may compass it:

'For, where my worthiness is poor,
 My will stands richly at the door
 To pay shortcomings evermore.

'Accept me therefore: not for price
 And not for pride my sacrifice
 Is tendered, for my soul is nice

'And will beat down those dusty seeds
 Of bearded corn if she succeeds
 In soaring while the covey feeds.

'I soar, I am drawn up like the lark
 To its white cloud: so high my mark,
 Albeit my wing is small and dark.

'I ask no wages, seek no fame:
 Sew me, for shroud round face and name,
 God's banner of the oriflamme.

'I only would have leave to loose
 (In tears and blood if so He choose)
 Mine inward music out to use;

'I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance, but not in vain—
Upon the sweetness of that strain;

'Only project beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice, and live on in its sound;

'Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends, whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my past.'

The angel's smile grew more divine,
The mortal speaking; ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow
Did vibrate with the light below;
But what he said I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was laid,—

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, one by one
Rejoicing in a worthy son:

My soul, which might have seen, grew blind
By what it looked on: I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim, white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze. And so, as erst,
A strain more noble than the first
Mused in the organ, and outburst:

With giant march from floor to roof
 Rose the full notes, now parted off
 In pauses massively aloof

Like measured thunders, now re-joined
 In concords of mysterious kind
 Which fused together sense and mind,

Now flashing sharp on sharp along
 Exultant in a mounting throng,
 Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors, wavelike sounds
 Re-eddying into silver rounds,
 Enlarging liberty with bounds:

And every rhythm that seemed to close
 Survived in confluent underflows
 Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
 And greatened, with its glorified
 Wings shot abroad from side to side,

Waved backward (as a wind might wave
 A Brocken mist and with as brave
 Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—
 Then swelling outward, prodigal
 Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared, and drew up with it the whole
 Of this said vision, as a soul
 Is raised by a thought. And as a scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled
 Still upward with a gradual gold,
 So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnized and crowned;
While the freed clouds of incense wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly like the rack
O' the moon in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him first
Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present. Vanishings
Of glory with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed: the lady's face
Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark and there and so
She melted as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted slow:

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously
Beyond her, far as memory.

Then he looked round: he was alone.
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being wound,
He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that smeared the ground;

The far wood-pines like offing ships;
 The fourth pool's yew anear him drips,
World's cruelty attaints his lips,

And still he tastes it, bitter still;
 Through all that glorious possible
 He had the sight of present ill.

Yet rising calmly up and slowly
 With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
 A mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the wood
 And prayed along the solitude
 Betwixt the pines, 'O God, my God!'

The golden morning's open flowings
 Did sway the trees to murmurous bowings,
 In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the wood,
 He prayed along the solitude,
 'Thou, Poet-God, art great and good!

'And though we must have, and have had
 Right reason to be earthly sad,
 Thou, Poet-God, art great and glad!'

CONCLUSION

Life treads on life, and heart on heart;
 We press too close in church and mart
 To keep a dream or grave apart:

And I was 'ware of walking down
 That same green forest where had gone
 The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east
 A red and tender radiance pressed
 Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round;
 While up the leafiness profound
 A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
 I turned that way, and now and then
 The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
 Of the dew sliding droppingly
 From the leaf-edges and apply

Back to their song: 'twixt dew and bird
 So sweet a silence ministered,
 God seemed to use it for a word,

Yet morning souls did leap and run
 In all things, as the least had won
 A joyous insight of the sun,

And no one looking round the wood
 Could help confessing as he stood,
This Poet-God is glad and good.

But hark! a distant sound that grows,
 A heaving, sinking of the boughs,
 A rustling murmur, not of those,

A breezy noise which is not breezel
 And white-clad children by degrees
 Steal out in troops among the trees,

Fair little children morning-bright,
 With faces grave yet soft to sight,
 Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within reach,
 And others leapt up high to catch
 The upper boughs and shake from each

A rain of dew till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed; but the laugh flew
From its own chirrup as might do

A frightened song-bird; and a child
Who seemed the chief said very mild,
'Hush! keep this morning undefiled.'

His eyes rebuked them from calm spheres;
His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
'What are your palms for?' 'To be spread,'
He answered, 'on a poet dead.'

'The poet died last month, and now
The world which had been somewhat slow
In honoring his living brow,

'Commands the palms; they must be strewn
On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town.'

I sighed and said, 'Did he foresee
Any such honor?' 'Verily
I cannot tell you,' answered he.

'But this I know, I fain would lay
My own head down, another day,
As *he* did,—with the fame away.

'A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

'Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

'With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on their iris broad
The images of things bestowed

'By the chief Poet. "God!" he cried,
"Be praised for anguish which has tried,
For beauty which has satisfied:

'"For this world's presence half within
And half without me—thought and scene—
This sense of Being and Having Been.

'"I thank Thee that my soul hath room
For Thy grand world: both guests may come—
Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb.

'"I am content to be so weak:
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

'"I am content to be so bare
Before the archers, everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly air.

'"I laid my soul before Thy feet
That images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

'"I am content to feel the step,
Of each pure image: let those keep
To mandragore who care to sleep.

'"I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

“Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter, Thou art kind,
And I am blessed to my mind.

“Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn and its scent outgive:
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

“In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

“*I know*—is all the mourner saith,
Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And Life is perfected by Death.”’

The child spake nobly: strange to hear,
His infantine soft accents clear
Charged with high meanings, did appear;

And fair to see, his form and face
Winged out with whiteness and pure grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew;
An orient beam which pierced it through
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown
Traced on its brightness up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown:

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go
With holy words to saints below—

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

‘And so he died,’ I whispered. ‘Nay,
Not so,’ the childish voice did say,
‘That poet turned him first to pray

‘In silence, and God heard the rest
’Twixt the sun’s footsteps down the west.
Then he called one who loved him best,

‘Yea, he called softly through the room
(His voice was weak yet tender)—“Come,”
He said, “come nearer! Let the bloom

“Of Life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of Death, which is not wide—
I shall be soon at the other side.

“Come, kiss me!” So the one in truth
Who loved him best,—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to mouth:

‘And in that kiss of love was won
Life’s manumission. All was done:
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone*.

‘But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by His,
To words of truth and uprightness.’

The child’s voice trembled, his lips shook
Like a rose leaning o’er a brook,
Which vibrates though it is not struck.

‘And who,’ I asked, a little moved
Yet curious-eyed, ‘was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behooved?’

'I,' softly said the child; and then
 'I,' said he louder, once again:
 'His son, my rank is among men:

'And now that men exalt his name
 I come to gather palms with them,
 That holy love may hallow fame.

'He did not die alone, nor should
 His memory live so, 'mid these rude
 World-praisers—a worse solitude.

'Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
 Where these are strewing branch and bloom,
 Saying, "Come nearer:" and I come.

'Glory to God!' resumèd he,
 And his eyes smiled for victory
 O'er their own tears which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and chin:
 'That poet now has entered in
 The place of rest which is not sin.

'And while he rests, his songs in troops
 Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
 Companioned by diviner hopes.'

'But *thou*,' I murmured to engage
 The child's speech farther—'hast an age
 Too tender for this orphanage.'

'Glory to God—to God!' he saith:
 'KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,
 AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH.'

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY

I

To the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,
Toll slowly.

And the oldest ringer said, 'Ours is music for the dead
 When the rebecks are all done.'

II

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the north side in a row,
Toll slowly.

And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes
 Of the grassy graves below.

III

On the south side and the west a small river runs in haste,
Toll slowly.

And, between the river flowing and the fair green trees
 a-growing,
 Do the dead lie at their rest.

IV

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow gray:
Toll slowly.

Through the rain of willow-branches I could see the low hill-
 ranges
 And the river on its way.

V

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly,
Toll slowly.

While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the solemn
 noises,—
 Yet death seemed more loud to me.

VI

There I read this ancient rhyme while the bell did all the time
Toll slowly.
 And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,
 Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME

I

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged,
Toll slowly.
 And three hundred years had stood mute adown each hoary
 wood,
 Like a full heart having prayed.

II

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
Toll slowly.
 And but little thought was theirs of the silent antique years,
 In the building of their nest.

III

Down the sun dropped large and red on the towers of Lin-
 teged,—
Toll slowly.
 Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in fiery
 light,
 While the castle stood in shade.

IV

There the castle stood up black with the red sun at its back—
Toll slowly—
 Like a sullen smouldering pyre with a top that flickers fire
 When the wind is on its track.

V

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall—

Toll slowly.

And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights had stood

And to-night was near its fall.

VI

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride did come—

Toll slowly.

One who proudly trod the floors and softly whispered in the doors,

‘May good angels bless our home.’

VII

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies:

Toll slowly.

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth where the untired smile of youth
Did light outward its own sighs!

VIII

’T was a Duke’s fair orphan-girl, and her uncle’s ward—the Earl—

Toll slowly—

Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry gold,

To his son Lord Leigh the churl.

IX

But what time she had made good all her years of womanhood—

Toll slowly.

Unto both these lords of Leigh spake she out right sovranly,
‘My will runneth as my blood.’



‘And while this same blood makes red this same right hand’s
veins,’ she said—

Toll slowly—

‘’T is my will, as lady free, not to wed a lord of Leigh,
But Sir Guy of Linteged.’

XI

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful
youth—

Toll slowly.

‘Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft and
small
For so large a will, in sooth.’

XII

She too smiled by that same sign, but her smile was cold and
fine—

Toll slowly.

‘Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it were not worth the hold
Of thy son, good uncle minel’

XIII

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in
his teeth—

Toll slowly—

‘He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an she
loathed,
Let the life come or the death.’

XIV

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father’s child might
rise—

Toll slowly.

'Thy hound's blood, my lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,'
 quoth she,
 'And he moans not where he lies:

XV

'But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward'—
Toll slowly.
 'By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl and
 dowered lady,
 I deny you wife and ward!'

XVI

Unto each she bowed her head and swept past with lofty tread.
Toll slowly.
 Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the priest,
 Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

XVII

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode
 amain—
Toll slowly.
 Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on the
 turf,
 In the pauses of the rain.

XVIII

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pursued
 amain—
Toll slowly.
 Steed on steed-track, dashing off,—thickening, doubling, hoof
 on hoof,
 In the pauses of the rain.

XIX

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan steed of
might—

Toll slowly.

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,
Smiling out into the night.

XX

‘Dost thou fear?’ he said at last. ‘Nay,’ she answered him in
haste,—

Toll slowly.

‘Not such death as we could find—only life with one behind.
Ride on fast as fear, ride fast!’

XXI

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and fet-
locks spread—

Toll slowly.

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered,
down the banks,
To the towers of Linteged.

XXII

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed
about—

Toll slowly.

In the courtyard rose the cry, ‘Live the Duchess and Sir Guy!’
But she never heard them shout.

XXIII

On the steed she dropped her cheek, kissed his mane and
kissed his neck—

Toll slowly.

‘I had happier died by thee than lived on, a Lady Leigh,’
Were the first words she did speak.

XXIV

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment and to-day—

Toll slowly.

When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle wall
To recapture Duchess May.

XXV

And the castle standeth black with the red sun at its back—

Toll slowly.

And a fortnight's siege is done, and, except the duchess, none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

XXVI

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so gray of
blee—

Toll slowly.

And thin lips that scarcely sheathe the cold white gnashing of
his teeth,
Gnashed in smiling, absently,—

XXVII

Cried aloud, 'So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess
May!'

Toll slowly.

'Look thy last upon that sun! if thou seest to-morrow's one
'T will be through a foot of clay.

XXVIII

'Ha, fair bride! dost hear no sound save that moaning of the
hound?'

Toll slowly.

'Thou and I have parted troth, yet I keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round.

XXIX

'Hal thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past compare'—

Toll slowly.

'Yet thine old love's falchion brave is as strong a thing to have,
As the will of lady fair.

XXX

'Peck on blindly, netted dove! If a wife's name thee behove'—

Toll slowly.

'Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has hid
the sorrow

Of thy last ill-mated love.

XXXI

'O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back
troth:'

Toll slowly.

'He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least
"I forbid you, I am loth!"

XXXII

'I will wring thy fingers pale in the gauntlet of my mail:'

Toll slowly.

"Little hand and muckle gold" close shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did, to prevail.'

XXXIII

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west—

Toll slowly.

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

XXXIV

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—

Toll slowly.

‘Tower is strong and will is free: thou canst boast, my lord of
Leigh,
But thou boastest little wit.’

XXXV

In her tire-glass gazèd she, and she blushed right womanly—

Toll slowly.

She blushed half from her disdain, half her beauty was so
plain,
—‘Oath for oath, my lord of Leigh!’

XXXVI

Straight she called her maidens in—‘Since ye gave me blame
herein’—

Toll slowly—

‘That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.’

XXXVII

‘It is three months gone to-day since I gave mine hand away:’

Toll slowly.

‘Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-state in
them,
While we keep the foe at bay.’

XXXVIII

‘On your arms I loose mine hair; comb it smooth and crown it
fair’—

Toll slowly.

‘I would look in purple pall from this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that ’s there!’

XXXIX

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west—

Toll slowly.

On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

XL

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean down passionate:

Toll slowly.

They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter therewithal
With no knocking at the gate.

XLI

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered, snapped upon the
stone—

Toll slowly.

'Sword,' he thought, with inward laugh, 'ill thou servest for a
staff

When thy nobler use is done!

XLII

'Sword, thy nobler use is done! tower is lost, and shame be-
gun!'

Toll slowly.

'If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.

XLIII

'If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall'—

Toll slowly.

'But if I die here alone,—then I die who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

XLIV

'Five true friends lie for my sake in the moat and in the brake'—
Toll slowly.

'Thirteen warriors lie at rest with a black wound in the breast,
 And not one of these will wake.

XLV

'So, no more of this shall be! heart-blood weighs too heavily'—
Toll slowly.

'And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the brave
 Heaped around and over me.

XLVI

'Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a plighted
 faith'—

Toll slowly.

'Since my pale young sister's cheeks blush like rose when
 Ronald speaks,
 Albeit never a word she saith—

XLVII

'These shall never die for me: life-blood falls too heavily:'
Toll slowly.

'And if *I* die here apart, o'er my dead and silent heart
 They shall pass out safe and free.

XLVIII

'When the foe hath heard it said—"Death holds Guy of
 Linteged"—'

Toll slowly.

'That new corse new peace shall bring, and a blessèd, blessèd
 thing
 Shall the stone be at its head.

XLIX

‘Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my
memory’—

Toll slowly.

‘Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my widowed
bride
Whose sole sin was love of me:

L

‘With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her
and entreat’—

Toll slowly.

‘And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting head
While her tears drop over it.

LI

‘She will weep her woman’s tears, she will pray her woman’s
prayers’—

Toll slowly.

‘But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring again
By the suntime of her years.

LII

‘Ah, sweet May! ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed thee my
belief’—

Toll slowly—

‘That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets, in
completeness!
Now my May-day seemeth brief.’

LIII

All these silent thoughts did swim o’er his eyes grown strange
and dim—

Toll slowly.

Till his true men, in the place, wished they stood there face to
face
With the foe instead of him.

LIV

'One last oath, my friends that wear faithful hearts to do and
dare!'

Toll slowly.

'Tower must fall and bride be lost—swear me service worth the
cost!'

Bold they stood around to swear.

LV

'Each man clasp my hand and swear by the deed we failed in
there'—

Toll slowly.

'Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow to-
night!'

Pale they stood around to swear.

LVI

'One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to do
and dare!'

Toll slowly.

'Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before
you all:

Guide him up the turret-stair.

LVII

'Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this height:'

Toll slowly.

'Once in love and twice in war hath he borne me strong and
far:

He shall bear me far to-night.'

LVIII

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him speaking so—

Toll slowly.

‘‘Las! the noble heart,’ they thought, ‘he in sooth is grief-distraught:

Would we stood here with the foel’

LIX

But a fire flashed from his eye, ’twixt their thought and their reply—

Toll slowly.

‘Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here, must ride fast

As we wish our foes to fly.’

LX

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he did wear—

Toll slowly.

Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes of the floors,

But they goad him up the stair.

LXI

Then from out her bower chambère did the Duchess May repair:

Toll slowly.

‘Tell me now what is your need,’ said the lady, ‘of this steed,
That ye goad him up the stair?’

LXII

Calm she stood; unbodkined through, fell her dark hair to her shoe:

Toll slowly.

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

LXIII

'Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like yesterday'—

Toll slowly.

'One half-hour completes the breach; and thy lord grows wild of speech—

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray!

LXIV

'In the east tower, high'st of all, loud he cries for steed from stall:'

Toll slowly.

"He would ride as far," quoth he, "as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall."

LXV

'And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof did fall'—

Toll slowly.

'Wifely prayer meets deathly need: may the sweet Heavens
hear thee plead

If he rides the castle-wall!

LXVI

Low she dropped her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on
the floor—

Toll slowly.

And tear after tear you heard fall distinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

LXVII

'Get thee in, thou soft ladye! here is never a place for thee!'

Toll slowly.

'Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its
moan

May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.'

LXVIII

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face:

Toll slowly.

Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering, seems
to look

Right against the thunder-place.

LXIX

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone
beside—

Toll slowly.

'Go to, faithful friends, go to! judge no more what ladies do,
No, nor how their lords may ride!'

LXX

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss and
stroke:

Toll slowly.

Soft he neighed to answer her, and then followed up the stair
For the love of her sweet look:

LXXI

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around—

Toll slowly.

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her
treading

Did he follow, meek as hound.

LXXII

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a hoof
did fall—

Toll slowly.

Out they swept, a vision steady, noble steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall.

LXXIII

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up silently—

Toll slowly.

And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her
eyes

Which he could not bear to see.

LXXIV

Quoth he, 'Get thee from this strife, and the sweet saints bless
thy life!'

Toll slowly.

'In this hour I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed,
But no more of my noble wife.'

LXXV

Quoth she, 'Meekly have I done all thy biddings under sun:'

Toll slowly.

'But by all my womanhood, which is proved so, true and good,
I will never do this one.

LXXVI

'Now by womanhood's degree and by wifehood's verity'—

Toll slowly.

'In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of *me*.

LXXVII

'By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardie'—

Toll slowly.

'If, this hour, on castle-wall can be room for steed from stall,
Shall be also room for *me*.

LXXVIII

‘So the sweet saints with me be,’ (did she utter solemnly)—
Toll slowly.

‘If a man, this eventide, on this castle-wall will ride,
 He shall ride the same with *me*.’

LXXIX

Oh, he sprang up in the selle and he laughed out bitter-well—
Toll slowly.

‘Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other eves,
 To hear chime a vesper-bell?’

LXXX

She clung closer to his knee—‘Ay, beneath the cypress-tree!’
Toll slowly.

‘Mock me not, for otherwise than along the greenwood fair
 Have I ridden fast with thee.

LXXXI

‘Fast I rode with new-made vows from my angry kinsman’s
 house:’

Toll slowly.

‘What, and would you men should reck that I dared more for
 love’s sake
 As a bride than as a spouse?’

LXXXII

‘What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all’—
Toll slowly.

‘That a bride may keep your side while through castle-gate
 you ride,
 Yet eschew the castle-wall?’

LXXXIII

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin and roars up against her suing—

Toll slowly.

With the inarticulate din and the dreadful falling in—

Shrieks of doing and undoing!

LXXXIV

Twice he wrung her hands in twain, but the small hands closed again.

Toll slowly.

Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed along his track

With a frantic clasp and strain.

LXXXV

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window and door—

Toll slowly.

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of 'kill!' and 'flee!'

Strike up clear amid the roar.

LXXXVI

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain, but they closed and clung again—

Toll slowly.

While she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon the rood,

In a spasm of deathly pain.

LXXXVII

She clung wild and she clung mute with her shuddering lips
half-shut:

Toll slowly.

Her head fallen as half in swoond, hair and knee swept on the
ground,
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

LXXXVIII

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery coping-
stone:

Toll slowly.

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement behind
Whence a hundred feet went down:

LXXXIX

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank be-
strode—

Toll slowly.

‘Friends and brothers, save my wife! Pardon, sweet, in change
for life,—
But I ride alone to God.’

XC

Straight as if the Holy name had upbreathed her like a flame—
Toll slowly.

She upsprang, she rose upright, in his selle she sate in sight,
By her love she overcame.

XCI

And her head was on his breast where she smiled as one at
rest—

Toll slowly.

‘Ring,’ she cried, ‘O vesper-bell in the beechwood’s old
chappelle—
But the passing-bell rings best!’

XCII

They have caught out at the rein which Sir Guy threw loose—
in vain—

Toll slowly.

For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised in air,
On the last verge rears amain.

XCIII

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and his nostrils curdle in—
Toll slowly.

Now he shivers head and hoof and the flakes of foam fall off,
And his face grows fierce and thin:

XCIV

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did go:
Toll slowly.

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony
Of the headlong death below,—

XCV

And, 'Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,' still she cried, 'i' the old
chappelle'

Toll slowly.

Then, back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung out
to wrack,
Horse and riders overfell.

I

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west—
Toll slowly.

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the churchyard, while the
chime
Slowly tolled for one at rest.

II

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did run—
Toll slowly.

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and its
 change,
 Here, where all done lay undone.

III

And beneath a willow tree I a little grave did see—
Toll slowly—

Where was graved—HERE, UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-
 YEAR CHILD,
 EIGHTEEN HUNDRED FORTY-THREE.

IV

Then, O spirits, did I say, ye who rode so fast that day—
Toll slowly.

Did star-wheels and angel wings with their holy winnowings
 Keep beside you all the way?

V

Though in passion ye would dash, with a blind and heavy
 crash—

Toll slowly—

Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the
 field,—
 Though your heart and brain were rash,—

VI

Now, your will is all unwilling; now, your pulses are all stilled:
Toll slowly.

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the
 child
 Whose small grave was lately filled.

VII

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now—
Toll slowly.

And the children might be bold to pluck the kingcups from
 your mould
 Ere a month had let them grow.

VIII

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near in spring—
Toll slowly.

Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out on it,
 Murmuring not at anything.

IX

In your patience ye are strong, cold and heat ye take not
 wrong—

Toll slowly.

When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
 Time will seem to you not long.

X

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west—
Toll slowly.

And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with death,
 And who knoweth which is best?

XI

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west—
Toll slowly.

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our in-
 completeness,—
 Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE LADY'S 'YES'

I

'Yes,' I answered you last night;
 'No,' this morning, sir, I say:
 Colors seen by candle-light
 Will not look the same by day.

II

When the viols played their best,
 Lamps above and laughs below,
Love me sounded like a jest,
 Fit for *yes* or fit for *no*.

III

Call me false or call me free,
 Vow, whatever light may shine,—
 No man on your face shall see
 Any grief for change on mine.

IV

Yet the sin is on us both;
 Time to dance is not to woo;
 Wooing light makes fickle troth,
 Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

V

Learn to win a lady's faith
 Nobly, as the thing is high,
 Bravely, as for life and death,
 With a loyal gravity.

VI

Lead her from the festive boards,
 Point her to the starry skies;
 Guard her, by your truthful words,
 Pure from courtship's flatteries.

VII

By your truth she shall be true,
 Ever true, as wives of yore;
 And her *yes*, once said to you,
 SHALL be Yes for evermore.

THE POET AND THE BIRD

A FABLE

I

Said a people to a poet—'Go out from among us straightway!
 While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine:
 There's a little fair brown nightingale who, sitting in the gate-
 way,
 Makes fitter music to our ear than any song of thine!'

II

The poet went out weeping; the nightingale ceased chanting:
 'Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness
 done?'
 —'I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,
 Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun.'

III

The poet went out weeping, and died abroad, bereft there;
 The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand wails:
 And when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there
 Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's.

THE LOST BOWER

I

In the pleasant orchard-closes,
 'God bless all our gains,' say we,
 But 'May God bless all our losses'
 Better suits with our degree.
 Listen, gentle—ay, and simple! listen, children on the kneel

II

Green the land is where my daily
 Steps in jocund childhood played,
 Dimpled close with hill and valley,
 Dappled very close with shade:
 Summer-snow of apple-blossoms running up from glade to
 glade.

III

There is one hill I see nearer
 In my vision of the rest;
 And a little wood seems clearer
 As it climbeth from the west,
 Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland crest.

IV

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
 And, completing the ascent,
 Where the wind blows and sun dazzles,
 Thrills in leafy tremblement,
 Like a heart that after climbing beateth quickly through
 content.

V

Not a step the wood advances
 O'er the open hill-top's bound;
 There, in green arrest, the branches
 See their image on the ground:
 You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and glad
 with sound.

VI

For you hearken on your right hand,
 How the birds do leap and call
 In the greenwood, out of sight and
 Out of reach and fear of all;
 And the squirrels crack the filberts through their cheerful
 madrigal.

VII

On your left, the sheep are cropping
 The slant grass and daisies pale,
 And five apple-trees stand dropping
 Separate shadows toward the vale
 Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you their 'All hail'

VIII

Far out, kindled by each other,
 Shining hills on hills arise,
 Close as brother leans to brother
 When they press beneath the eyes
 Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

IX

While beyond, above them mounted,
 And above their woods alsò,
 Malvern hills, for mountains counted
 Not unduly, loom a-row—
 Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the sunshine and
 the snow.



Yet, in childhood, little prized I
 That fair walk and far survey;
 'T was a straight walk unadvised by
 The least mischief worth a nay;
 Up and down—as dull as grammar on the eve of holiday.

XI

But the wood, all close and clenching
 Bough in bough and root in root,—
 No more sky (for overbranching)
 At your head than at your foot,—
 Oh, the wood drew me within it by a glamour past dispute!

XII

Few and broken paths showed through it,
 Where the sheep had tried to run,—
 Forced with snowy wool to strew it
 Round the thickets, when anon
 They, with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into the sun.

XIII

But my childish heart beat stronger
 Than those thickets dared to grow:
I could pierce them! *I* could longer
 Travel on, methought, than so:
 Sheep for sheep-paths! braver children climb and creep where
 they would go.

XIV

And the poets wander, said I,
 Over places all as rude:
 Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
 Sat to meet him in a wood:
 Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

XV

And if Chaucer had not travelled
 Through a forest by a well,
 He had never dreamt nor marvelled
 At those ladies fair and fell
 Who lived smiling without loving in their island-citadel.

XVI

Thus I thought of the old singers
 And took courage from their song,
 Till my little struggling fingers
 Tore asunder gyve and thong
 Of the brambles which entrapped me, and the barrier branches
 strong.

XVII

On a day, such pastime keeping,
 With a fawn's heart debonair,
 Under-crawling, overleaping
 Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
 I stood suddenly astonished—I was gladdened unaware.

XVIII

From the place I stood in, floated
 Back the covert dim and close,
 And the open ground was coated
 Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
 And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily across.

XIX

Here a linden-tree stood, bright'ning
 All adown its silver rind;
 For as some trees draw the lightning,
 So this tree, unto my mind,
 Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from the sky where it was
 shrined.

XX

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
 An old hawthorn also grew;
 And wood-ivy like a spirit
 Hovered dimly round the two,
 Shaping thence that bower of beauty which I sing of thus to
 you.

XXI

'T was a bower for garden fitter
 Than for any woodland wide:
 Though a fresh and dewy glitter
 Struck it through from side to side,
 Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning
 plied.

XXII

Oh, a lady might have come there,
 Hooded fairly like her hawk,
 With a book or lute in summer,
 And a hope of sweeter talk,—
 Listening less to her own music than for footsteps on the walk!

XXIII

But that bower appeared a marvel
 In the wildness of the place;
 With such seeming art and travail,
 Finely fixed and fitted was
 Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the base.

XXIV

And the ivy veined and glossy
 Was enwrought with eglantine;
 And the wild hop fibred closely,
 And the large-leaved columbine,
 Arch of door and window-mullion, did right sylvanly entwine.

XXV

Rose-trees either side the door were
 Growing lithe and growing tall,
 Each one set a summer warder
 For the keeping of the hall,—
 With a red rose and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the wall.

XXVI

As I entered, mosses hushing
 Stole all noises from my foot;
 And a green elastic cushion,
 Clapsed within the linden's root,
 Took me in a chair of silence very rare and absolute.

XXVII

All the floor was paved with glory,
 Greenly, silently inlaid
 (Through quick motions made before me) .
 With fair counterparts in shade
 Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead.

XXVIII

'Is such pavement in a palace?'
 So I questioned in my thought:
 The sun, shining through the chalice
 Of the red rose hung without,
 Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt.

XXIX

At the same time, on the linen
 Of my childish lap there fell
 Two white may-leaves, downward winning
 Through the ceiling's miracle,
 From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing well.

XXX

Down to floor and up to ceiling
 Quick I turned my childish face,
 With an innocent appealing
 For the secret of the place
 To the trees, which surely knew it in partaking of the grace.

XXXI

Where 's no foot of human creature
 How could reach a human hand?
 And if this be work of Nature,
 Why has Nature turned so bland,
 Breaking off from other wild-work? It was hard to understand.

XXXII

Was she weary of rough-doing,
 Of the bramble and the thorn?
 Did she pause in tender rueing
 Here of all her sylvan scorn?
 Or in mock of Art's deceiving was the sudden mildness worn?

XXXIII

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
 Be the work of Dryad strong,
 Who, surviving all that chanced
 In the world's old pagan wrong,
 Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the last true poet's song?

XXXIV

Or was this the house of fairies,
 Left, because of the rough ways,
 Unassoiled by Ave Marys
 Which the passing pilgrim prays,
 And beyond St. Catherine's chiming on the blessèd Sabbath
 days?

XXXV

So, young muser, I sat listening
 To my fancy's wildest word:
 On a sudden, through the glistening
 Leaves around, a little stirred,
 Came a sound, a sense of music which was rather felt than
 heard.

XXXVI

Softly, finely, it inwound me;
 From the world it shut me in,—
 Like a fountain, falling round me,
 Which with silver waters thin
 Clips a little water Naiad sitting smilingly within.

XXXVII

Whence the music came, who knoweth?
 I know nothing: but indeed
 Pan or Faunus never bloweth
 So much sweetness from a reed
 Which has sucked the milk of waters at the oldest river-head.

XXXVIII

Never lark the sun can waken
 With such sweetness! when the lark,
 The high planets overtaking
 In the half-*evanished* Dark,
 Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark.

XXXIX

Never nightingale so singeth:
 Oh, she leans on thorny tree
 And her poet-song she flingeth
 Over pain to victory!
 Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me.

XL

Never blackbirds, never thrushes
 Nor small finches sing as sweet,
 When the sun strikes through the bushes
 To their crimson clinging feet,
 And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens
 complete.

XLI

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd
 Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
 He of green and azure dreamèd,
 While it sat in spirit-ruth
 On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent mouth.

XLII

If it *were* a bird?—ah, sceptic,
 Give me 'yea' or give me 'nay'—
 Though my soul were nympholeptic
 As I heard that virèlay,
 You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far away!

XLIII

I rose up in exaltation
 And an inward trembling heat,
 And (it seemed) in geste of passion
 Dropped the music to my feet
 Like a garment rustling downwards—such a silence followed it!

XLIV

Heart and head beat through the quiet
 Full and heavily, though slower:
 In the song, I think, and by it,
 Mystic Presences of power
 Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to the
 Hour.

XLV

In a child-abstraction lifted,
 Straightway from the bower I past,
 Foot and soul being dimly drifted
 Through the greenwood, till, at last,
 In the hill-top's open sunshine I all consciously was cast.

XLVI

Face to face with the true mountains
 I stood silently and still,
 Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,
 From the air about the hill,
 And from Nature's open mercies and most debonair goodwill.

XLVII

Oh, the golden-hearted daisies
 Witnessed there, before my youth,
 To the truth of things, with praises
 Of the beauty of the truth;
 And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

XLVIII

And I said within me, laughing,
 I have found a bower to-day,
 A green lusus, fashioned half in
 Chance and half in Nature's play,
 And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay.

XLIX

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy
 Of this bower not built by one;
 I will go there, sad or merry,
 With each morning's benison,
 And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have won.

L

So I said. But the next morning,
 (—Child, look up into my face—
 'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorning!
 This is truth in its pure grace!)

The next morning, all had vanished, or my wandering missed
 the place.

LI

Bring an oath most sylvan-holy,
 And upon it swear me true—
 By the wind-bells swinging slowly
 Their mute curfews in the dew,
 By the advent of the snowdrop, by the rosemary and rue,—

LII

I affirm by all or any,
 Let the cause be charm or chance,
 That my wandering searches many
 Missed the bower of my romance—
 That I nevermore upon it turned my mortal countenance.

LIII

I affirm that, since I lost it,
 Never bower has seemed so fair;
 Never garden-creeper crossed it
 With so deft and brave an air,
 Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them there.

LIV

Day by day, with new desire,
 Toward my wood I ran in faith,
 Under leaf and over brier,
 Through the thickets, out of breath;
 Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long as
 death.

LV

But his sword of mettle clashèd,
 And his arm smote strong, I ween,
 And her dreaming spirit flashèd
 Through her body's fair white screen,
 And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys
 green:

LVI

But for me, I saw no splendor—
 All my sword was my child-heart;
 And the wood refused surrender
 Of that bower it held apart,
 Safe as Œdipus's grave-place 'mid Colonos' olives swart.

LVII

As Aladdin sought the basements
 His fair palace rose upon,
 And the four-and-twenty casements
 Which gave answers to the sun;
 So, in 'wilderment of gazing, I looked up and I looked down.

LVIII

Years have vanished since, as wholly
 As the little bower did then;
 And you call it tender folly
 That such thoughts should come again?
 Ah, I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother men!

LIX

For this loss it did prefigure
 Other loss of better good,
 When my soul, in spirit-vigor
 And in ripened womanhood,
 Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbor in a wood.

LX

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure,
 Many a hope and many a power—
 Studious health and merry leisure,
 The first dew on the first flower!
 But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

LXI

I have lost the dream of Doing,
 And the other dream of Done,
 The first spring in the pursuing,
 The first pride in the Begun,—
 First recoil from incompleteness, in the face of what is won—

LXII

Exaltations in the far light
 Where some cottage only is;
 Mild dejections in the starlight,
 Which the sadder-hearted miss;
 And the child-cheek blushing scarlet for the very shame of
 bliss.

LXIII

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
 Which the thunder could not break;
 Something too of the strong leaping
 Of the staglike heart awake,
 Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought to take.

LXIV

Some respect to social fictions
 Has been also lost by me;
 And some generous genuflexions,
 Which my spirit offered free
 To the pleasant old conventions of our false humanity.

LXV

All my losses did I tell you,
 Ye perchance would look away;—
 Ye would answer me, 'Farewell! you
 Make sad company to-day,
 And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words you say.'

LXVI

For God placed me like a dial
 In the open ground with power,
 And my heart had for its trial
 All the sun and all the shower:
 And I suffered many losses,—and my first was of the bower.

LXVII

Laugh you? If that loss of mine be
 Of no heavy-seeming weight—
 When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
 The young children laugh thereat;
 Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall be
 great.

LXVIII

One who knew me in my childhood
 In the glamour and the game,
 Looking on me long and mild, would
 Never know me for the same.
 Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes over-
 came!

LXIX

By this couch I weakly lie on,
 While I count my memories,—
 Through the fingers which, still sighing,
 I press closely on mine eyes,—
 Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower arise.

LXX

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
 Stroked with light adown its rind;
 And the ivy-leaves serenely
 Each in either intertwined;
 And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown nor
 pined.

LXXI

From those overblown faint roses
 Not a leaf appeareth shed,
 And that little bud discloses
 Not a thorn's-breadth more of red,
 For the winters and the summers which have passed me over-
 head.

LXXII

And that music overfloweth,
 Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves:
 Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth?
 Fay or Faunus—who believes?
 But my heart still trembles in me to the trembling of the
 leaves.

LXXIII

Is the bower lost, then? who sayeth
 That the bower indeed is lost?
 Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
 Through the sunshine and the frost,—
 And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and uttermost.

LXXIV

Till another open for me
 In God's Eden-land unknown,
 With an angel at the doorway,
 White with gazing at his Throne;
 And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—'All is lost . . .
 and won!'

A CHILD ASLEEP

I

How he sleepeth, having drunken
 Weary childhood's mandragore!
 From its pretty eyes have sunken
 Pleasures to make room for more;
 Sleeping near the withered nosegay which he pulled the day
 before.

II

Nosegays! leave them for the waking;
 Throw them earthward where they grew;
 Dim are such beside the breaking
 Amaranths he looks unto:
 Folded eyes see brighter colors than the open ever do.

III

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
 From the palms they sprang beneath,
 Now perhaps divinely holden,
 Swing against him in a wreath:
 We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and of his
 breath.

IV

Vision unto vision calleth
 While the young child dreameth on:
 Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
 With the glory thou hast won!
 Darker wast thou in the garden yestermorn by summer sun.

V

We should see the spirits ringing
 Round thee, were the clouds away:
 'T is the child-heart draws them, singing
 In the silent-seeming clay—
 Singing! stars that seem the mutest go in music all the way.

VI

As the moths around a taper,
 As the bees around a rose,
 As the gnats around a vapor,
 So the spirits group and close
 Round about a holy childhood as if drinking its repose.

VII

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
 Flash their diadems of youth
 On the ringlets which half screen thee,
 While thou smilest . . . not in sooth
Thy smile, but the overfair one, dropt from some ethereal
 mouth.

VIII

Haply it is angels' duty,
 During slumber, shade by shade
 To fine down this childish beauty
 To the thing it must be made
 Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall see it
 fade.

IX

Softly, softly! make no noises!
 Now he lieth dead and dumb;
 Now he hears the angels' voices
 Folding silence in the room:
 Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words as they
 come.

X

Speak not! he is consecrated;
 Breathe no breath across his eyes:
 Lifted up and separated
 On the hand of God he lies
 In a sweetness beyond touching, held in cloistral sanctities.

XI

Could ye bless him, father—mother,
 Bless the dimple in his cheek?
 Dare ye look at one another
 And the benediction speak?
 Would ye not break out in weeping and confess yourselves too
 weak?

XII

He is harmless, ye are sinful;
 Ye are troubled, he at ease;
 From his slumber virtue winful
 Floweth outward with increase.
 Dare not bless him! but be blessed by his peace, and go in
 peace.

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

'Pheu, pheu, ti prosderkesthe m' ommasiu, tekna;'
—Medea.

I

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
 Ere the sorrow comes with years?
 They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
 And *that* cannot stop their tears.
 The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
 The young birds are chirping in the nest,

The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
 The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
 But the young, young children, O my brothers,
 They are weeping bitterly!
 They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
 In the country of the free.

II

Do you question the young children in the sorrow
 Why their tears are falling so?
 The old man may weep for his to-morrow
 Which is lost in Long Ago;
 The old tree is leafless in the forest,
 The old year is ending in the frost,
 The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
 The old hope is hardest to be lost:
 But the young, young children, O my brothers,
 Do you ask them why they stand
 Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
 In our happy Fatherland?

III

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
 And their looks are sad to see,
 For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
 Down the cheeks of infancy;
 'Your old earth,' they say, 'is very dreary,
 Our young feet,' they say, 'are very weak;
 Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
 Our grave-rest is very far to seek:
 Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
 For the outside earth is cold,
 And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
 And the graves are for the old.

IV

'True,' say the children, 'it may happen
 That we die before our time:
 Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
 Like a snowball, in the rime.
 We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
 Was no room for any work in the close clay!
 From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
 Crying, "Get up, little Alice! it is day."
 If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
 With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
 Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
 For the smile has time for growing in her eyes:
 And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
 The shroud by the kirk-chime.
 It is good when it happens,' say the children,
 "That we die before our time.'

V

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
 Death in life, as best to have:
 They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
 With a cerement from the grave.
 Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
 Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
 Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty.
 Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
 But they answer, 'Are your cowslips of the meadows
 Like our weeds anear the mine?
 Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
 From your pleasures fair and fine!

VI

'For oh,' say the children, 'we are weary,
 And we cannot run or leap;
 If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
 To drop down in them and sleep.

Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
 We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
 And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping
 The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
 For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
 Through the coal-dark, underground;
 Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
 In the factories, round and round.

VII

'For all day the wheels are droning, turning;
 Their wind comes in our faces,
 Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,
 And the walls turn in their places:
 Turns the sky in the high window, blank and reeling,
 Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
 Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling:
 All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
 And all day the iron wheels are droning,
 And sometimes we could pray,
 "O ye wheels" (breaking out in a mad moaning),
 "Stop! be silent for to-day!"'

VIII

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
 For a moment, mouth to mouth!
 Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
 Of their tender human youth!
 Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
 Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:
 Let them prove their living souls against the notion
 That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!
 Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
 Grinding life down from its mark;
 And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
 Spin on blindly in the dark.

IX

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
 To look up to Him and pray;
 So the blessèd One who blesseth all the others,
 Will bless them another day.
 They answer, 'Who is God that He should hear us,
 While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
 When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
 Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
 And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
 Strangers speaking at the door:
 Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
 Hears our weeping any more?

X

'Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
 And at midnight's hour of harm,
 "Our Father," looking upward in the chamber,
 We say softly for a charm.
 We know no other words except "Our Father,"
 And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
 God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
 And hold both within his right hand which is strong.
 "Our Father!" If He heard us, He would surely
 (For they call Him good and mild)
 Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
 "Come and rest with me, my child."

XI

'But, no!' say the children, weeping faster,
 'He is speechless as a stone:
 And they tell us, of His image is the master
 Who commands us to work on.
 Go to!' say the children,—'up in Heaven,
 Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.

Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:
 We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.'
 Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
 O my brothers, what ye preach?
 For God's possible is taught by his world's loving,
 And the children doubt of each.

XII

And well may the children weep before you!
 They are weary ere they run;
 They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
 Which is brighter than the sun.
 They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
 They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
 Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
 Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:
 Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
 The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
 Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
 Let them weep! let them weep!

XIII

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
 And their look is dread to see,
 For they mind you of their angels in high places,
 With eyes turned on Deity.
 'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel nation,
 Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
 Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
 And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
 Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
 And your purple shows your path!
 But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
 Than the strong man in his wrath.'

CROWNED AND WEDDED

I

When last before her people's face her own fair face she bent,
 Within the meek projection of that shade she was content
 To erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed as if it
 might

Be still kept holy from the world to childhood still in sight—
 To erase it with a solemn vow, a princely vow—to rule;
 A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God the pitiful;
 A very godlike vow—to rule in right and righteousness
 And with the law and for the land—so God the vower bless!

II

The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I ween,
 And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty aisled
 scene;

The priests stood stolèd in their pomp, the sworded chiefs in
 theirs,

And so, the collared knights, and so, the civil ministers,
 And so, the waiting lords and dames, and little pages best
 At holding trains, and legates so, from countries east and west;
 So, alien princes, native peers, and highborn ladies bright,
 Along whose brows the Queen's, now crowned, flashed
 coronets to light;

And so, the people at the gates with priestly hands on high
 Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty;
 And so the DEAD, who lie in rows beneath the minster floor,
 There verily an awful state maintaining evermore:
 The statesman whose clean palm will kiss no bribe whate'er
 it be,

The courtier who for no fair queen will rise up to his knee,
 The court-dame who for no court-tire will leave her shroud
 behind,

The laureate who no courtlier rhyme than 'dust to dust' can
 find,

The kings and queens who having made that vow and worn
that crown,

Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown:

Dieu et mon droit—what is 't to them? what meaning can it
have?—

The King of kings, the right of death—God's judgment and
the grave.

And when betwixt the quick and dead the young fair queen
had vowed,

The living shouted 'May she live! Victoria, live!' aloud:

And as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed between,
'The blessings happy monarchs have be thine, O crownèd
queen!'

III

But now before her people's face she bendeth hers anew,
And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness thereunto.
She vowed to rule, and in that oath her childhood put away:
She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love to-day.

O lovely lady! let her vow! such lips become such vows,
And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with vernal brows.

O lovely lady! let her vow! yea, let her vow to love!
And though she be no less a queen, with purples hung above,
The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly to ground,
Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that state,
While loving hopes for retinues about her sweetness wait.

SHE vows to love who vowed to rule—(the chosen at her side)
Let none say, God preserve the queen! but rather, Bless the
bride!

None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none violate the
dream

Wherein no monarch but a wife she to herself may seem.
Or if ye say, Preserve the queen! oh, breathe it inward low—
She is a *woman*, and *beloved*! and 't is enough but so.

Count it enough, thou noble prince who tak'st her by the hand
And claimest for thy lady-love our lady of the land!

And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high and
rare,

And true to truth and brave for truth as some at Augsburg
were,

We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts and by thy poet-mind
Which not by glory and degree takes measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing.

IV

And now, upon our queen's last vow what blessings shall we
pray?

None straitened to a shallow crown will suit our lips to-day:
Behold, they must be free as love, they must be broad as free,
Even to the borders of heaven's light and earth's humanity.
Long live she!—send up loyal shouts, and true hearts pray
between,—

'The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be thine, O crownèd
queen!'

CROWNED AND BURIED

I

Napoleon!—years ago, and that great word
Compact of human breath in hate and dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

II

Napoleon!—nations, while they cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse; and while others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame;
And dying men on trampled battle-sods
Near their last silence uttered it for God's.

III

Napoleon!—sages, with high foreheads drooped,
 Did use it for a problem; children small
 Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call;
 Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
 By meek-eyed Christs; and widows with a moan
 Spake it, when questioned why they sat alone.

IV

That name consumed the silence of the snows
 In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid;
 The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
 And over-rushed her mountainous repose
 In search of eyries: and the Egyptian river
 Mingled the same word with its grand 'For ever.'

V

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
 Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habitants,
 Packed to humanity's significance,
 Motioned it back with stillness,—shouts as idle
 As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice
 Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

VI

The world's face changed to hear it; kingly men
 Came down in chidden babes' bewilderment
 From autocratic places, each content
 With sprinkled ashes for anointing: then
 The people laughed or wondered for the nonce,
 To see one throne a composite of thrones.

VII

Napoleon!—even the torrid vastitude
 Of India felt in throbbings of the air
 That name which scattered by disastrous blare

All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood.
 Napoleon!—from the Russias west to Spain:
 And Austria trembled till ye heard her chain.

VIII

And Germany was 'ware; and Italy
 Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,
 High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked—
 Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,
 To serve a newer: ay! but Frenchmen cast
 A future from them nobler than their past:

IX

For verily though France augustly rose
 With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
 The purple of the world, none gave so much
 As she in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
 Whose hands, toward freedom stretched, dropped paralyzed
 To wield a sword or fit an undersized

X

King's crown to a great man's head. And though along
 Her Paris' streets did float on frequent streams
 Of triumph, pictured or enmarbled dreams
 Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
 No dream of all so won was fair to see
 As the lost vision of her liberty.

XI

Napoleon!—'t was a high name lifted high:
 It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
 Our compassing and covering atmosphere
 And open a clear sight beyond the sky
 Of supreme empire; this of earth's was done—
 And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

XII

The kings crept out—the peoples sat at home,
 And finding the long-invoked peace
 (A pall embroidered with worn images
 Of rights divine) too scant to cover doom
 Such as they suffered, cursed the corn that grew
 Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

XIII

A deep gloom centred in the deep repose;
 The nations stood up mute to count their dead:
 And he who owned the NAME which vibrated
 Through silence,—trusting to his noblest foes
 When earth was all too gray for chivalry,
 Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea.

XIV

O wild Saint Helen! very still she kept him,
 With a green willow for all pyramid,
 Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
 A little more if pilgrims overwept him,
 Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay
 Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

XV

Nay, not so long! France kept her old affection
 As deeply as the sepulchre the corse;
 Until, dilated by such love's remorse
 To a new angel of the resurrection,
 She cried 'Behold, thou England! I would have
 The dead, whereof thou wottest, from that grave.'

XVI

And England answered in the courtesy
 Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit:
 'Take back thy dead! and when thou buriest it,

Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me.'
 Amen, mine England! 't is a courteous claim:
 But ask a little room too—for thy shame!

XVII

Because it was not well, it was not well,
 Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
 Among the Oceanides,—that Heart
 To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.
 I would, my noble England, men might seek
 All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek!

XVIII

I would that hostile fleets had scarred Torbay,
 Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
 Until thy princely purpose was assured,
 Then left a shadow, not to pass away—
 Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun:
 Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done!

XIX

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust
 We fain would pay back something of our debt
 To France, if not to honor, and forget,
 How through much fear we falsified the trust
 Of a fallen foe and exile. We return
 Orestes to Electra—in his urn.

XX

A little urn—a little dust inside,
 Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
 To-day a four-years child might carry it
 Sleek-browed and smiling, 'Let the burden 'bidel'
 Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
 Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

XXI

And run back in the chariot-marks of time,
 When all the people shall come forth to meet
 The passive victor, death-still in the street
 He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime
 And martial music, under eagles which
 Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz!

XXII

Napoleon!—he hath come again, borne home
 Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
 Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
 Majestically moaning. Give him room!
 Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
 And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded column!

XXIII

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
 From roar of fields,—provided Jupiter
 Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
 His bolts!—and this he may: for, dispossessed
 Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
 The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm.

XXIV

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name
 Shakes the old casements of the world; and we
 Look out upon the passing pageantry,
 Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
 To a French grave,—another kingdom won,
 The last, of few spans—by Napoleon.

XXV

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth
 But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
 Meridian light. He was a despot—granted!

But the *autos* of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i' the people's French; he magnified
The image of the freedom he denied:

XXVI

And if they asked for rights, he made reply
'Ye have my glory!'—and so, drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound them
In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true! but none
Were ruled like slaves: each felt Napoleon.

XXVII

I do not praise this man: the man was flawed
For Adam—much more, Christ!—his knee unbent,
His hand unclean, his aspiration pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why, let him have
The justice to be honored in his grave.

XXVIII

I think this nation's tears thus poured together,
Better than shouts. I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all.
I think this grave stronger than thrones. But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be worthier, I discern not: angels may.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG

I

Loving friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith has run
Through thy lower nature,
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature!

II

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
 Flow thy silken ears adown
 Either side demurely
 Of thy silver-suited breast
 Shining out from all the rest
 Of thy body purely.

III

Darkly brown thy body is,
 Till the sunshine striking this
 Alchemize its dulness,
 When the sleek curls manifold
 Flash all over into gold
 With a burnished fulness.

IV

Underneath my stroking hand,
 Startled eyes of hazel bland
 Kindling, growing larger,
 Up thou leapest with a spring,
 Full of prank and curveting,
 Leaping like a charger.

V

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light,
 Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
 Canopied in fringes;
 Leap! those tasselled ears of thine
 Flicker strangely, fair and fine
 Down their golden inches.

VI

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
 Little is 't to such an end
 That I praise thy rareness;

Other dogs may be thy peers
 Haply in these drooping ears
 And this glossy fairness.

VII

But of *thee* it shall be said,
 This dog watched beside a bed
 Day and night unweary,
 Watched within a curtained room
 Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
 Round the sick and dreary.

VIII

Roses, gathered for a vase,
 In that chamber died apace,
 Beam and breeze resigning;
 This dog only, waited on,
 Knowing that when light is gone
 Love remains for shining.

IX

Other dogs in thymy dew
 Tracked the hares and followed through
 Sunny moor or meadow;
 This dog only, crept and crept
 Next a languid cheek that slept,
 Sharing in the shadow.

X

Other dogs of loyal cheer
 Bounded at the whistle clear,
 Up the woodside hieing;
 This dog only, watched in reach
 Of a faintly uttered speech
 Or a louder sighing.

XI

And if one or two quick tears
 Dropped upon his glossy ears
 Or a sigh came double,
 Up he sprang in eager haste,
 Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
 In a tender trouble.

XII

And this dog was satisfied
 If a pale thin hand would glide
 Down his dewlaps sloping,—
 Which he pushed his nose within,
 After,—platforming his chin
 On the palm left open.

XIII

This dog, if a friendly voice
 Call him now to blither choice
 Than such chamber-keeping,
 ‘Come out!’ praying from the door,—
 Presseth backward as before,
 Up against me leaping.

XIV

Therefore to this dog will I,
 Tenderly not scornfully,
 Render praise and favor:
 With my hand upon his head,
 Is my benediction said
 Therefore and for ever.

XV

And because he loves me so,
 Better than his kind will do
 Often man or woman,

Give I back more love again
 Than dogs often take of men,
 Leaning from my Human.

XVI

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
 Pretty collars make thee fine,
 Sugared milk make fat thee!
 Pleasures wag on in thy tail,
 Hands of gentle motion fail
 Nevermore, to pat thee!

XVII

Downy pillow take thy head,
 Silken coverlid bedstead,
 Sunshine help thy sleeping!
 No fly's buzzing wake thee up,
 No man break thy purple cup
 Set for drinking deep in.

XVIII

Whiskered cats aointed flee,
 Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
 Cologne distillations;
 Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
 And thy feast-day macaroons
 Turn to daily rations!

XIX

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?—
 Tears are in my eyes to feel
 Thou art made so straitly,
 Blessing needs must straiten too,—
 Little canst thou joy or do,
 Thou who lovest *greatly*.

XX

Yet be blessèd to the height
 Of all good and all delight
 Pervious to thy nature;
 Only *loved* beyond that line,
 With a love that answers thine,
 Loving fellow-creature!

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT

I

When ye stood up in the house
 With your little childish feet,
 And, in touching Life's first shows,
 First the touch of Love did meet,—
 Love and Nearness seeming one,
 By the heartlight cast before,
 And of all Beloveds, none
 Standing farther than the door;
 Not a name being dear to thought,
 With its owner beyond call;
 Not a face, unless it brought
 Its own shadow to the wall;
 When the worst recorded change
 Was of apple dropt from bough,
 When love's sorrow seemed more strange
 Than love's treason can seem now;—
 Then, the Loving took you up
 Soft, upon their elder knees,
 Telling why the statues droop
 Underneath the churchyard trees,
 And how ye must lie beneath them
 Through the winters long and deep,
 Till the last trump overbreathe them,
 And ye smile out of your sleep.

Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said
 A tale of fairy ships
 With a swan-wing for a sail;
 Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
 For the merry merry tale—
 So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead!

II

Soon ye read in solemn stories
 Of the men of long ago,
 Of the pale bewildering glories
 Shining farther than we know;
 Of the heroes with the laurel,
 Of the poets with the bay,
 Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
 For that beauteous Helena;
 How Achilles at the portal
 Of the tent heard footsteps nigh,
 And his strong heart, half-immortal,
 Met the *keitai* with a cry;
 How Ulysses left the sunlight
 For the pale eidola race
 Blank and passive through the dun light,
 Staring blindly in his face;
 How that true wife said to Pætus,
 With calm smile and wounded heart,
 'Sweet, it hurts not!' How Admetus
 Saw his blessed one depart;
 How King Arthur proved his mission,
 And Sir Roland wound his horn,
 And at Sangreal's moony vision
 Swords did bristle round like corn.

Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed, the while ye read,
 That this Death, then, must be found
 A Valhalla for the crowned,
 The heroic who prevail:
 None, be sure can enter in
 Far below a paladin
 Of a noble noble tale—
 So awfully ye thought upon the Dead!

III

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light,—
That wakes, starting up and bounding,
In a lonely lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round him,
Stifling black about his head!
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and loud,
And ye heard the thunder hurtle
From the silence of the cloud.
Funeral-torches at your gateway
Threw a dreadful light within.
All things changed: you rose up straightway,
And saluted Death and Sin.
Since, your outward man has rallied,
And your eye and voice grown bold;
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
With her saddest secret told.
Happy places have grown holy:
If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down slowly,
As at solemn sacrament.
Merry books, once read for pastime,
If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the brain.
Household names, which used to flutter
Through your laughter unawares,—
God's Divinest ye could utter
With less trembling in your prayers.
Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye tread
On your own hearts in the path
Ye are called to in His wrath,
And your prayers go up in wail

—‘Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
 O Thou agonized on cross?
 Art thou reading all its tale?’
 So mournfully ye think upon the Dead!

IV

Pray, pray, thou who also weepst,
 And the drops will slacken so.
 Weep, weep, and the watch thou keepest
 With a quicker count will go.
 Think: the shadow on the dial
 For the nature most undone,
 Marks the passing of the trial,
 Proves the presence of the sun.
 Look, look up, in starry passion,
 To the throne above the spheres:
 Learn: the spirit’s gravitation
 Still must differ from the tear’s.
 Hope: with all the strength thou usest
 In embracing thy despair.
 Love: the earthly love thou losest
 Shall return to thee more fair.
 Work: make clear the forest-tangles
 Of the wildest stranger-land.
 Trust: the blessed deathly angels
 Whisper, ‘Sabbath hours at hand!’
 By the heart’s wound when most gory,
 By the longest agony,
 Smile! Behold in sudden glory
 The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee!*
 And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,
 ‘My Belovèd, is it so?
 Have ye tasted of my woe?
 Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!’
 He stands brightly where the shade is,
 With the keys of Death and Hades,
 And there, ends the mournful tale—
 So hopefully ye think upon the Dead!

A FLOWER IN A LETTER

I

My lonely chamber next the sea
 Is full of many flowers set free
 By summer's earliest duty:
 Dear friends upon the garden-walk
 Might stop amid their fondest talk
 To pull the least in beauty.

II

A thousand flowers, each seeming one
 That learnt by gazing on the sun
 To counterfeit his shining;
 Within whose leaves the holy dew
 That falls from heaven has won anew
 A glory, in declining.

III

Red roses, used to praises long,
 Contented with the poet's song,
 The nightingale's being over;
 And lilies white, prepared to touch
 The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
 Of dreamer turned to lover.

IV

Deep violets, you liken to
 The kindest eyes that look on you,
 Without a thought disloyal;
 And cactuses a queen might don
 If weary of a golden crown,
 And still appear as royal.

V

Pansies for ladies all,—I wis
 That none who wear such brooches miss
 A jewel in the mirror;
 And tulips, children love to stretch
 Their fingers down, to feel in each
 Its beauty's secret nearer.

VI

Love's language may be talked with these;
 To work out choicest sentences,
 No blossoms can be meeter;
 And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
 Young maids may wonder if the flowers
 Or meanings be the sweeter.

VII

And such being strewn before a bride,
 Her little foot may turn aside,
 Their longer bloom decreeing,
 Unless some voice's whispered sound
 Should make her gaze upon the ground
 Too earnestly for seeing.

VIII

And such being scattered on a grave,
 Whoever mourneth there may have
 A type which seemeth worthy
 Of that fair body hid below,
 Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
 Then perished as the earthy.

IX

And such being wreathed for worldly feast,
 Across the brimming cup some guest
 Their rainbow colors viewing

May feel them, with a silent start,
 The covenant, his childish heart
 With nature made, renewing.

X

No flowers our gardened England hath
 To match with these, in bloom and breath,
 Which from the world are hiding
 In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
 A nunnery of cloistered hills,
 The elements presiding.

XI

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
 That meet one gifted lady's care
 With prodigal rewarding:
 (For Beauty is too used to run
 To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
 To light her through the garden).

XII

But here, all summers are comprised,
 The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
 Before the priestly moonshine;
 And every wind with stolèd feet
 In wandering down the alleys sweet
 Steps lightly on the sunshine.

XIII

And (having promised Harpocrate
 Among the nodding roses that
 No harm shall touch his daughters)
 Gives quite away the rushing sound
 He dares not use upon such ground
 To ever-trickling waters.

XIV

Yet, sun and wind! what can ye do
 But make the leaves more brightly show
 In posies newly gathered?
 I look away from all your best
 To one poor flower unlike the rest,
 A little flower half-withered.

XV

I do not think it ever was
 A pretty flower,—to make the grass
 Look greener where it reddened;
 And now it seems ashamed to be
 Alone, in all this company,
 Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

XVI

A chamber-window was the spot
 It grew in, from a garden-pot,
 Among the city shadows:
 If any, tending it, might seem
 To smile, 't was only in a dream
 Of nature in the meadows.

XVII

How coldly on its head did fall
 The sunshine, from the city wall
 In pale refraction driven!
 How sadly plashed upon its leaves
 The raindrops, losing in the eaves
 The first sweet news of heaven!

XVIII

And those who planted, gathered it
 In gamesome or in loving fit,
 And sent it as a token

Of what their city pleasures be,—
 For one, in Devon by the sea
 And garden blooms, to look on.

XIX

But SHE for whom the jest was meant
 With a grave passion innocent
 Receiving what was given,—
 Oh, if her face she turnèd then,
 Let none say 't was to gaze again
 Upon the flowers of Devon!

XX

Because, whatever virtue dwells
 In genial skies, warm oracles
 For gardens brightly springing,—
 The flower which grew beneath your eyes,
 Belovèd friends, to mine supplies
 A beauty worthier singing!

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN

I

'There is no God' the foolish saith,
 But none 'There is no sorrow,'
 And nature oft the cry of faith
 In bitter need will borrow:
 Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
 By wayside graves are raised,
 And lips say 'God be pitiful,'
 Who ne'er said 'God be praised.'
 Be pitiful, O God!

II

The tempest stretches from the steep
 The shadow of its coming,
 The beasts grow tame and near us creep,

As help were in the human;
 Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and grind,
 We spirits tremble under—
 The hills have echoes, but we find
 No answer for the thunder.

Be pitiful, O God!

III

The battle hurtles on the plains,
 Earth feels new scythes upon her;
 We reap our brothers for the wains,
 And call the harvest—honor:
 Draw face to face, front line to line,
 One image all inherit,—
 Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
 Clay—clay, and spirit—spirit.

Be pitiful, O God!

IV

The plague runs festering through the town,
 And never a bell is tolling,
 And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
 Nod to the dead-cart's rolling:
 The young child calleth for the cup,
 The strong man brings it weeping,
 The mother from her babe looks up,
 And shrieks away its sleeping.

Be pitiful, O God!

V

The plague of gold strikes far and near,
 And deep and strong it enters;
 This purple chimar which we wear
 Makes madder than the centaur's:
 Our thoughts grow blank, our words grow strange,
 We cheer the pale gold-diggers,

Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
 And marked, like sheep, with figures.
 Be pitiful, O God!

VI

The curse of gold upon the land
 The lack of bread enforces;
 The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,
 Like more of Death's White Horses:
 The rich preach 'rights' and 'future days,'
 And hear no angel scoffing,
 The poor die mute, with starving gaze
 On corn-ships in the offing.
 Be pitiful, O God!

VII

We meet together at the feast,
 To private mirth betake us;
 We stare down in the winecup, lest
 Some vacant chair should shake us:
 We name delight, and pledge it round—
 'It shall be ours to-morrow!'
 God's seraphs, do your voices sound
 As sad, in naming sorrow?
 Be pitiful, O God!

VIII

We sit together, with the skies,
 The steadfast skies, above us,
 We look into each other's eyes,
 'And how long will you love us?'
 The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
 The voices, low and breathless,—
 'Till death us part!—O words, to be
 Our *best*, for love the deathless!
 Be pitiful, O God!

IX

We tremble by the harmless bed
 Of one loved and departed:
 Our tears drop on the lips that said
 Last night 'Be stronger-hearted!'
 O God—to clasp those fingers close,
 And yet to feel so lonely!
 To see a light upon such brows,
 Which is the daylight only!
 Be pitiful, O God!

X

The happy children come to us
 And look up in our faces;
 They ask us 'Was it thus, and thus,
 When we were in their places?'
 We cannot speak;—we see anew
 The hills we used to live in,
 And feel our mother's smile press through
 The kisses she is giving.
 Be pitiful, O God!

XI

We pray together at the kirk
 For mercy, mercy solely:
 Hands weary with the evil work,
 We lift them to the Holy.
 The corpse is calm below our knee,
 Its spirit, bright before Thee:
 Between them, worse than either, we—
 Without the rest or glory.
 Be pitiful, O God!

XII

We leave the communing of men,
 The murmur of the passions,
 And live alone, to live again
 With endless generations:

Are we so brave? The sea and sky
 In silence lift their mirrors,
 And, glassed therein, our spirits high
 Recoil from their own terrors.
 Be pitiful, O God!

XIII

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
 Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding:
 The sun strikes through the farthest mist
 The city's spire to golden:
 The city's golden spire it was,
 When hope and health were strongest,
 But now it is the churchyard grass
 We look upon the longest.
 Be pitiful, O God!

XIV

And soon all vision waxeth dull;
 Men whisper 'He is dying;'
 We cry no more 'Be pitiful'
 We have no strength for crying:
 No strength, no need. Then, soul of mine,
 Look up and triumph rather!
 Lo, in the depth of God's Divine,
 The Son adjures the Father,
 BE PITIFUL, O GOD!

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE

' . . . discordance that can accord.'
—Romaunt of the Rose.

A rose once grew within
 A garden April-green,
 In her liveness, in her liveness,
 And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
 On a tall bough and straight:
 Early comer, early comer,
 Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
 South winds to let her in,
 In her liveness, in her liveness,
 All the fairer for that oneness.

'For if I wait,' said she,
 'Till time for roses be,
 For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
 Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,

'What glory then for me
 In such a company?—
 Roses plenty, roses plenty
 And one nightingale for twenty!

'Nay, let me in,' said she,
 'Before the rest are free,
 In my liveness, in my liveness,
 All the fairer for that oneness.

'For I would lonely stand
 Uplifting my white hand,
 On a mission, on a mission,
 To declare the coming vision.

'Upon which lifted sign,
 What worship will be mine!
 What addressing, what caressing,
 And what thanks and praise and blessing!

'A windlike joy will rush
 Through every tree and bush,
 Bending softly in affection
 And spontaneous benediction.

'Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn as to a brightness,—

'And every moth and bee
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

'Three larks shall leave a cloud,
To my whiter beauty vowed,
Singing gladly all the moontide,
Never waiting for the suntide.

'Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

'I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When below on earth they see me
With my starry aspect dreamy.

'And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling
To give grace to my foretelling.'

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her lonesness, in her lonesness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah,—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
 To boast a perfect green,
 Scarcely having, scarcely having
 One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
 Along the southern wall,
 Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
 Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
 I ween, did miss her so,
 With his nest down in the gorses,
 And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
 To loiter beyond seas:
 Guess him in the Happy Islands,
 Learning music from the silence!

Only the bee, forsooth,
 Came in the place of both,
 Doing honor, doing honor
 To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down
 As on a royal crown;
 Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
 They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
 To waken from a dream,
 Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
 Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose, 'Ha, snow!
 And art thou fallen so?
 Thou, who wast enthronèd stately
 All along my mountains lately?

'Holla, thou world-wide snow!
 And art thou wasted so,
 With a little bough to catch thee,
 And a little bee to watch thee?'

—Poor Rose, to be misknown!
 Would she had ne'er been blown,
 In her lonesness, in her lonesness,
 All the sadder for that oneness!

Some word she tried to say,
 Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway!
 But the passion did o'ercome her,
 And the fair frail leaves dropped from her.

—Dropped from her fair and mute,
 Close to a poet's foot,
 Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
 As at something sad yet holy,—

Said 'Verily and thus
 It chances too with *us*
 Poets, singing sweetest snatches
 While that deaf men keep the watches:

'Vaunting to come before
 Our own age evermore,
 In a lonesness, in a lonesness,
 And the nobler for that oneness.

'Holy in voice and heart,
 To high ends, set apart:
 All unmated, all unmated,
 Just because so consecrated.

'But if alone we be,
 Where is our empery?
 And if none can reach our stature,
 Who can mete our lofty nature?

'What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimèd ringing?

'What angel but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim?
And without assimilation
Vain is interpenetration.

'And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unpreparedè season?

'Drop, leaf! be silent, song!
Cold things we come among:
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

'Howbeit' (here his face
Lightened around the place,
So to mark the outward turning
Of its spirit's inward burning)

'Something it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of his mild Beauty.

'Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be, in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow!

'Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us.

‘Though none us deign to bless,
 Blessèd are we, nathelless;
 Blessèd still and consecrated
 In that, rose, we were created.

‘Oh, shame to poet’s lays
 Sung for the dole of praise,—
 Hoarsely sung upon the highway
 With that *obolum da nihil*

‘Shame, shame to poet’s soul
 Pining for such a dole,
 When Heaven-chosen to inherit
 The high throne of a chief spirit!

‘Sit still upon your thrones,
 O ye poetic ones!
 And if, sooth, the world decry you,
 Let it pass unchallenged by you.

‘Ye to yourselves suffice,
 Without its flatteries.
 Self-contentedly approve you
 Unto HIM who sits above you,—

‘In prayers, that upward mount
 Like to a fair-sunned fount
 Which, in gushing back upon you,
 Hath an upper music won you,—

‘In faith, that still perceives
 No rose can shed her leaves,
 Far less, poet fall from mission,
 With an unfulfilled fruition,—

‘In hope, that apprehends
 An end beyond these ends,
 And great uses rendered duly
 By the meanest song sung truly,—

'In thanks, for all the good
 By poets understood,
 For the sound of seraphs moving
 Down the hidden depths of loving,—

'For sights of things away
 Through fissures of the clay,
 Promised things which *shall* be given
 And sung over, up in Heaven,—

'For life, so lovely-vain,
 For death, which breaks the chain,
 For this sense of present sweetness,
 And this yearning to completeness!'

BERTHA IN THE LANE

I

Put the broidery-frame away,
 For my sewing is all done:
 The last thread is used to-day,
 And I need not join it on.
 Though the clock stands at the noon
 I am weary. I have sewn,
 Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

II

Sister, help me to the bed,
 And stand near me, Dearest-sweet.
 Do not shrink nor be afraid,
 Blushing with a sudden heat!
 No one standeth in the street?—
 By God's love I go to meet,
 Love I thee with love complete.

III

Lean thy face down; drop it in
 These two hands, that I may hold
 'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
 Stroking back the curls of gold:
 'T is a fair, fair face, in sooth—
 Larger eyes and redder mouth
 Than mine were in my first youth.

IV

Thou art younger by seven years—
 Ah!—so bashful at my gaze,
 That the lashes, hung with tears,
 Grow too heavy to upraise?
 I would wound thee by no touch
 Which thy shyness feels as such.
 Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

V

Have I not been nigh a mother
 To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?
 Have we not loved one another
 Tenderly, from year to year,
 Since our dying mother mild
 Said with accents undefiled,
 'Child, be mother to this child!'

VI

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
 Stand up on the jasper sea,
 And be witness I have given
 All the gifts required of me,—
 Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,
 Love that left me with a wound,
 Life itself that turneth round!

VII

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
 Thou art standing in the room,
 In a molten glory shrined
 That rays off into the gloom!
 But thy smile is bright and bleak
 Like cold waves—I cannot speak,
 I sob in it, and grow weak.

VIII

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
 One hour longer from my soul,
 For I still am thinking of
 Earth's warm-beating joy and dole!
 On my finger is a ring
 Which I still see glittering
 When the night hides everything.

IX

Little sister, thou art pale!
 Ah, I have a wandering brain—
 But I lose that fever-bale,
 And my thoughts grow calm again.
 Lean down closer—closer still!
 I have words thine ear to fill,
 And would kiss thee at my will.

X

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
 Thee and Robert—through the trees,—
 When we all went gathering
 Boughs of may-bloom for the bees.
 Do not start so! think instead
 How the sunshine overhead
 Seemed to trickle through the shade.

XI

What a day it was, that day!
 Hills and vales did openly
 Seem to heave and throb away
 At the sight of the great sky:
 And the silence, as it stood
 In the glory's golden flood,
 Audibly did bud, and bud.

XII

Through the winding hedgerows green,
 How we wandered, I and you,
 With the bowery tops shut in,
 And the gates that showed the view!
 How we talked there; thrushes soft
 Sang our praises out, or oft
 Bleatings took them from the croft:

XIII

Till the pleasure grown too strong
 Left me muter evermore,
 And, the winding road being long,
 I walked out of sight, before,
 And so, wrapt in musings fond,
 Issued (past the wayside pond)
 On the meadow-lands beyond.

XIV

I sate down beneath the beech
 Which leans over to the lane,
 And the far sound of your speech
 Did not promise any pain;
 And I blessed you full and free,
 With a smile stooped tenderly
 O'er the may-flowers on my knee.

XV

But the sound grew into word
 As the speakers drew more near—
 Sweet, forgive me that I heard
 What you wished me not to hear.
 Do not weep so, do not shake,
 Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
 Good true answers for my sake.

XVI

Yes, and HE too! let him stand
 In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.
 Could he help it, if my hand
 He had claimed with hasty claim?
 That was wrong perhaps—but then
 Such things be—and will, again.
 Women cannot judge for men.

XVII

Had he seen thee when he swore
 He would love but me alone?
 Thou wast absent, sent before
 To our kin in Sidmouth town.
 When he saw thee who art blest
 Past compare, and loveliest,
 He but judged thee as the rest.

XVIII

Could we blame him with grave words,
 Thou and I, Dear, if we might?
 Thy brown eyes have looks like birds
 Flying straightway to the light:
 Mine are older.—Hush!—look out—
 Up the street! Is none without?
 How the poplar swings about!

XIX

And that hour—beneath the beech,
 When I listened in a dream,
 And he said in his deep speech
 That he owed me all *esteem*,—
 Each word swam in on my brain
 With a dim, dilating pain,
 Till it burst with that last strain.

XX

I fell flooded with a dark,
 In the silence of a swoon.
 When I rose, still cold and stark,
 There was night; I saw the moon
 And the stars, each in its place,
 And the may-blooms on the grass
 Seemed to wonder what I was.

XXI

And I walked as if apart
 From myself, when I could stand,
 And I pitied my own heart,
 As if I held it in my hand—
 Somewhat coldly, with a sense
 Of fulfilled benevolence,
 And a 'Poor thing' negligence.

XXII

And I answered coldly too,
 When you met me at the door;
 And I only *heard* the dew
 Dripping from me to the floor:
 And the flowers, I bade you see,
 Were too withered for the bee,—
 As my life, henceforth, for me.

XXIII

Do not weep so—Dear,—heart-warm!
 All was best as it befell.
 If I say he did me harm,
 I speak wild,—I am not well.
 All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me. Only, blood
 Runs so faint in womanhood!

XXIV

Then I always was too grave,—
 Like the saddest ballad sung,—
 With that look, besides, we have
 In our faces, who die young.
 I had died, Dear, all the same;
 Life's long, joyous, jostling game
 Is too loud for my meek shame.

XXV

We are so unlike each other,
 Thou and I, that none could guess
 We were children of one mother,
 But for mutual tenderness.
 Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
 And meant verily to hold
 Life's pure pleasures manifold.

XXVI

I am pale as crocus grows
 Close beside a rose-tree's root;
 Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
 Treads the crocus underfoot.
 I, like may-bloom on thorn-tree,
 Thou, like merry summer-bee,—
 Fit that I be plucked for thee!

XXVII

Yet who plucks me?—no one mourns,
 I have lived my season out,
 And now die of my own thorns
 Which I could not live without.
 Sweet, be merry! How the light
 Comes and goes! If it be night,
 Keep the candles in my sight.

XXVIII

Are there footsteps at the door?
 Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?
 Some one might be waiting for
 Some last word that I might say.
 Nay? So best!—so angels would
 Stand off clear from deathly road,
 Not to cross the sight of God.

XXIX

Colder grow my hands and feet.
 When I wear the shroud I made,
 Let the folds lie straight and neat,
 And the rosemary be spread,
 That if any friend should come,
 (To see *thee*, Sweet!) all the room
 May be lifted out of gloom.

XXX

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
 On my hand this little ring,
 Which at nights, when others sleep,
 I can still see glittering!
 Let me wear it out of sight,
 In the grave,—where it will light
 All the dark up, day and night.

XXXI

On that grave drop not a tear!
 Else, though fathom-deep the place,
 Through the woollen shroud I wear
 I shall feel it on my face.
 Rather smile there, blessèd one,
 Thinking of me in the sun,
 Or forget me—smiling on!

XXXII

Art thou near me? nearer! so—
 Kiss me close upon the eyes,
 That the earthly light may go
 Sweetly, as it used to rise
 When I watched the morning-gray
 Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
 He was sure to come that day.

XXXIII

So,—no more vain words be said!
 The hosannas nearer roll.
 Mother, smile now on thy Dead,
 I am death-strong in my soul.
 Mystic Dove alit on cross,
 Guide the poor bird of the snows
 Through the snow-wind above loss!

XXXIV

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
 Love's divine self-abnegation,
 Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
 And absorb the poor libation!
 Wind my thread of life up higher,
 Up, through angels' hands of fire!
 I aspire while I expire.

THAT DAY

I

I stand by the river where both of us stood,
 And there is but one shadow to darken the flood;
 And the path leading to it, where both used to pass,
 Has the step but of one, to take dew from the grass,—
 One forlorn since that day.

II

The flowers of the margin are many to see;
 None stoops at my bidding to pluck them for me.
 The bird in the alder sings loudly and long,—
 My low sound of weeping disturbs not his song,
 As thy vow did, that day.

III

I stand by the river, I think of the vow;
 Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker, be thou!
 I leave the flower growing, the bird unproved;
 Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*, my beloved,—
 And my lover that day?

IV

Go, be sure of my love, by that treason forgiven;
 Of my prayers, by the blessings they win thee from
 Heaven;
 Of my grief—(guess the length of the sword by the
 sheath's)
 By the silence of life, more pathetic than death's!
 Go,—be clear of that day!

LOVED ONCE

I

I classed, appraising once,
 Earth's lamentable sounds,—the welladay,
 The jarring yea and nay,
 The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
 The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller,—
 But all did leaven the air
 With a less bitter leaven of sure despair
 Than these words—'I loved ONCE.'

II

And who saith 'I loved ONCE'?
 Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love, love foresee,
 Love, through eternity,
 And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
 Not God, called LOVE, his noble crown-name casting,
 A light too broad for blasting:
 The great God, changing not from everlasting,
 Saith never 'I loved ONCE.'

III

Oh, never is 'Loved ONCE'
 Thy word, Thou Victim-Christ, misprizèd friend!
 Thy cross and curse may rend,
 But having loved Thou lovest to the end.
 This is man's saying—man's: too weak to move
 One spherèd star above,
 Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
 By his No More, and Once.

IV

How say ye 'We loved once,'
 Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold enow,
 Mourners, without that snow?

Ah friends, and would ye wrong each other so?
 And could ye say of some whose love is known,
 Whose prayers have met your own,
 Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shown
 So long,—‘We loved them ONCE’?

V

Could ye ‘We loved her once’
 Say calm of me, sweet friends, when out of sight?
 When hearts of better right
 Stand in between me and your happy light?
 Or when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
 Ye find my colors fade,
 And all that is not love in me decayed?
 Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

VI

Could ye ‘We loved her once’
 Say cold of me when further put away
 In earth’s sepulchral clay,
 When mute the lips which deprecate to-day?
 Not sol not then—least then! When life is shriven
 And death’s full joy is given,—
 Of those who sit and love you up in heaven
 Say not ‘We loved them once.’

VII

Say never ye loved ONCE:
 God is too near above, the grave beneath,
 And all our moments breathe
 Too quick in mysteries of life and death,
 For such a word. The eternities avenge
 Affections light of range.
 There comes no change to justify that change,
 Whatever comes—Loved ONCE!

VIII

And yet that same word ONCE
 Is humanly acceptive. Kings have said,
 Shaking a discrowned head,
 'We ruled once,'—dotards, 'We once taught and led,'
 Cripples once danced i' the vines, and bards approved,
 Were once by scornings moved:
 But love strikes one hour—LOVE! Those *never* loved
 Who dream that they loved ONCE.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS

'Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath.'
 —*Poems on Man*, by CORNELIUS MATHEWS.

I

We are born into life—it is sweet, it is strange.
 We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery
 Which smiles with a change;
 But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces,
 The Heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,
 And we think we could touch all the stars that we see;
 And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth;
 And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
 The apple of Life which another has found;
 It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
 And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four.

O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore!

II

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther;
 We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
 And the lilies look large as the trees;
 And, as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees,

And the birds sing like angels, so mystical-fine,
 And the cedars are brushing the archangels' feet,
 And time is eternity, love is divine,
 And the world is complete.
 Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond!
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

III

Then we leap on the earth with the armor of youth,
 And the earth rings again;
 And we breathe out 'O Beauty!' we cry out 'O truth!'
 And the bloom of our lips drops with wine,
 And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline;
 The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the
 brain,—
 What is this exultation? and what this despair?—
 The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,
 And we drop from the Fair as we climb to the Fair,
 And we lie in a trance at its feet;
 And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
 Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon,
 And we think him so near he is this side the sun,
 And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

IV

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
 Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
 Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures
 Which hideth the soul:
 And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
 And we swim with the fish through the broad water-
 course,
 And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
 And the joy which is in us flies out by a wound.

And we shout so aloud, 'We exult, we rejoice,'
 That we lose the low moan of our brothers around:
 And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
 We are deaf to God's voice.
 And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears
 Yet we are not ashamed,
 And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
 Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.
 Help us, God! trust us, man! love us, woman! 'I hold
 Thy small head in my hands,—with its grapelets of gold
 Growing bright through my fingers,—like altar for oath,
 'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
 That watch the eternity strong in the troth—
 I love thee, I leave thee,
 Live for thee, die for thee!
 I prove thee, deceive thee,
 Undo evermore thee!
 Help me, God! slay me, man!—one is mourning for both.'
 And we stand up though young near the funeral-sheet
 Which covers old Cæsar and old Pharamond,
 And death is so nigh us, life cools from its heat.
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Art thou fair, *art* thou sweet?

v

Then we act to a purpose, we spring up erect:
 We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds,
 We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked,
 We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,
 Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
 Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole.
 Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll!
 'While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
 Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn?
 Let us sit on the thrones
 In a purple sublimity,
 And grind down men's bones
 To a pale unanimity.
 Speed me, God! serve me, man! I am god over men;

When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again;
 'Neath the stripe and the bond,
 Lie and mourn at my feet!
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VI

Then we grow into thought, and with inward ascensions
 Touch the bounds of our Being.
 We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
 With our sensual relations and social conventions,
 Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound
 Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
 Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides
 With its infinite tides
 About and above us,—until the strong arch
 Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
 And through the dim rolling we hear the sweet calling
 Of spirits that speak in a soft undertongue
 The sense of the mystical march:
 And we cry to them softly, 'Come nearer, come nearer,
 And lift up the lap of this dark, and speak clearer,
 And teach us the song that ye sung!
 And we smile in our thought as they answer or no,
 For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know.
 Wonders breathe in our face
 And we ask not their name;
 Love takes all the blame
 Of the world's prison-place;
 And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud,
 And we send up the lark of our music that cuts
 Untired through the cloud
 To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts;
 Yet the angels look down and the mortals look up
 As the little wings beat,
 And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.
 'Twixt the heavens and the earth *can* a poet despond?
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VII

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,
 And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken,
 And bringing our lives to the level of others,
 Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length.
 'Help me, God! love me, man! I am man among men,
 And my life is a pledge
 Of the ease of another's!'

From the fire and the water we drive out the steam
 With a rush and a roar and the speed of a dream;
 And the car without horses, the car without wings,
 Roars onward and flies
 On its gray iron edge
 'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes:
 And our hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,
 Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies,
 And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,
 Draws under the world with its turmoils and pothers,
 While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms
 By humanity's hum at the root of the springs.
 And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the
 deeps

Of the souls of our brothers,
 We teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,
 'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth,'—which they hearken and think
 And work into harmony, link upon link,
 Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
 Shedding sparks of electric responding intense
 On the dark of eclipse.

Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
 As from shores of a star
 In aphelion, the new generations that cry
 Disenthralled by our voice to harmonious reply,
 'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth!'
 We are glorious forsooth,
 And our name has a seat,
 Though the shroud should be donned.
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VIII

Help me, God! help me, man! I am low, I am weak:
 Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins;
 My body is cleft by these wedges of pains

From my spirit's serene,
 And I feel the externe and insensate creep in
 On my organized clay;
 I sob not, nor shriek,
 Yet I faint fast away:

I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-eyed,—
 I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,
 On the heaven-heights of truth.

Oh, the soul keeps its youth
 But the body faints sore, it is tried in the race,
 It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal,
 It is weak, it is cold,
 The rein drops from its hold,
 It sinks back, with the death in its face.
 On, chariot! on, soul!
 Ye are all the more fleet—
 Be alone at the goal
 Of the strange and the sweet!

IX

Love us, God! love us, man! we believe, we achieve:

Let us love, let us live,
 For the acts correspond;
 We are glorious, and DIE:
 And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
 That smiles with a change,
 Here we lie.
 O DEATH, O BEYOND,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strangel

L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION

'Do you think of me as I think of you?'
*(From her poem written during
 the voyage to the Cape.)*

I

'Do you think of me as I think of you,
 My friends, my friends?'—She said it from the sea,
 The English minstrel in her minstrelsy,
 While, under brighter skies than erst she knew,
 Her heart grew dark, and groped there as the blind
 To reach across the waves friends left behind—
 'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

II

It seemed not much to ask—'as *I* of *you*?'
 We all do ask the same; no eyelids cover
 Within the meekest eyes that question over:
 And little in the world the Loving do
 But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for
 The echo of their own love evermore—
 'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

III

Love-learnèd she had sung of love and love,—
 And like a child that, sleeping with dropt head
 Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
 Whatever household noises round him move,
 Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
 Even so suggestive to her inward sense,
 All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

IV

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,
 When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries
 Were broken in her visionary eyes

By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
 Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,
 She asked not,—‘Do you praise me, O my land?’
 But,—‘Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?’

V

Hers was the hand that played for many a year
 Love’s silver phrase for England, smooth and well.
 Would God her heart’s more inward oracle
 In that lone moment might confirm her dear!
 For when her questioned friends in agony
 Made passionate response, ‘We think of thee,’
 Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

VI

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?
 Was she content, content with ocean’s sound
 Which dashed its mocking infinite around
 One thirsty for a little love?—beneath
 Those stars content, where last her song had gone,—
 They mute and cold in radiant life, as soon
 Their singer was to be, in darksome death?

VII

Bring your vain answers—cry, ‘We think of thee!’
 How think ye of her? warm in long ago
 Delights? or crowned with budding bays? Not so.
 None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,
 With all her visions unfulfilled save one,
 Her childhood’s, of the palm-trees in the sun—
 And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

VIII

‘Do ye think of me as I think of you?’—
 O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood
 Of all the world! what are we that we should

For covenants of long affection sue?
 Why press so near each other when the touch
 Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much
 Is this 'Think of me as I think of you.'

IX

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
 A sigh to mortal issues, verily
 Above the unshaken stars that see us die,
 A vocal pathos rolls; and HE who drew
 All life from dust, and for all tasted death,
 By death and life and love appealing, saith
Do you think of me as I think of you?

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS

I

I would build a cloudy House
 For my thoughts to live in,
 When for earth too fancy-loose,
 And too low for heaven:
 Hush! I talk my dream aloud,
 I build it bright to see,—
 I build it on the moonlit cloud
 To which I looked with *thee*.

II

Cloud-walls of the morning's gray,
 Faced with amber column,
 Crowned with crimson cupola
 From a sunset solemn:
 May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
 Pale and glimmering,
 With a sunbeam hid in each
 And a smell of spring.

III

Build the entrance high and proud,
 Darkening and then brightening,
 Of a riven thunder-cloud,
 Veinèd by the lightning:
 Use one with an iris-stain
 For the door so thin,
 Turning to a sound like rain
 As I enter in.

IV

Build a spacious hall thereby
 Boldly, never fearing;
 Use the blue place of the sky
 Which the wind is clearing:
 Branched with corridors sublime,
 Flecked with winding stairs,
 Such as children wish to climb
 Following their own prayers.

V

In the mutest of the house
 I will have my chamber;
 Silence at the door shall use
 Evening's light of amber,
 Solemnizing every mood,
 Softening in degree,
 Turning sadness into good
 As I turn the key.

VI

Be my chamber tapestried
 With the showers of summer,
 Close, but soundless, glorified
 When the sunbeams come here—

Wandering harpers, harping on
 Waters stringed for such,
 Drawing color, for a tune,
 With a vibrant touch.

VII

Bring a shadow green and still
 From the chestnut-forest,
 Bring a purple from the hill,
 When the heat is sorest;
 Spread them out from wall to wall,
 Carpet-wove around,
 Whereupon the foot shall fall
 In light instead of sound.

VIII

Bring fantastic cloudlets home
 From the noontide zenith,
 Ranged for sculptures round the room,
 Named as Fancy weeneth;
 Some be Junos, without eyes,
 Naiads, without sources,
 Some be birds of paradise,
 Some, Olympian horses.

IX

Bring the dews the birds shake off
 Waking in the hedges,—
 Those too perfumed, for a proof,
 From the lilies' edges:
 From our England's field and moor,
 Bring them calm and white in,
 Whence to form a mirror pure
 For Love's self-delighting.

X

Bring a gray cloud from the east
 Where the lark is singing,
 (Something of the song at least
 Unlost in the bringing):
 That shall be a morning-chair,
 Poet-dream may sit in
 When it leans out on the air,
 Unrhymed and unwritten.

XI

Bring the red cloud from the sun,
 While he sinketh catch it;
 That shall be a couch,—with one
 Sidelong star to watch it,—
 Fit for poet's finest thought
 At the curfew-sounding;
 Things unseen being nearer brought
 Than the seen, around him.

XII

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh.
 'Las, they come together!
 Cloudy walls divide and fly
 As in April weather.
 Cupola and column proud,
 Structure bright to see,
 Gone! except that moonlit cloud
 To which I looked with *thee*.

XIII

Let them! Wipe such visionings
 From the fancy's cartel:
 Love secures some fairer things,
 Dowered with his immortal.

The sun may darken, heaven be bowed,
 But still unchanged shall be,—
 Here, in my soul,—that moonlit cloud
 To which I looked with **THEE**!

CATARINA TO CAMOENS

(DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO
 THE POEM IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS
 OF HER EYES)

I

On the door you will not enter,
 I have gazed too long: adieu!
 Hope withdraws her peradventure;
 Death is near me,—and not *you*.
 Come, O lover,
 Close and cover
 These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
 ‘Sweetest eyes were ever seen!’

II

When I heard you sing that burden
 In my vernal days and bowers,
 Other praises disregarding,
 I but hearkened that of yours—
 Only saying
 In heart-playing,
 ‘Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
 If the sweetest **HIS** have seen!’

III

But all changes. At this vesper,
 Cold the sun shines down the door.
 If you stood there, would you whisper
 ‘Love, I love you,’ as before,—

Death pervading
 Now, and shading
 Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
 As the sweetest ever seen?

IV

Yes. I think, were you beside them,
 Near the bed I die upon,
 Though their beauty you denied them,
 As you stood there, looking down,
 You would truly
 Call them duly,
 For the love's sake found therein,
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen.'

V

And if *you* looked down upon them,
 And if *they* looked up to *you*,
 All the light which has forgone them
 Would be gathered back anew:
 They would truly
 Be as duly
 Love-transformed to beauty's sheen,
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen.'

VI

But, ah me! you only see me,
 In your thoughts of loving man,
 Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
 Through the wavings of my fan;
 And unweeting
 Go repeating,
 In your reverie serene,
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen—'

VII

While my spirit leans and reaches
 From my body still and pale,
 Fain to hear what tender speech is
 In your love to help my bale.
 O my poet,
 Come and show it!
 Come, latest love, to glean
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen.'

VIII

O my poet, O my prophet,
 When you praised their sweetness so,
 Did you think, in singing of it,
 That it might be near to go?
 Had you fancies
 From their glances,
 That the grave would quickly screen
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen'?

IX

No reply. The fountain's warble
 In the courtyard sounds alone.
 As the water to the marble
 So my heart falls with a moan
 From love-sighing
 To this dying.
 Death forerunneth Love to win
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen.'

X

Will you come? When I'm departed
 Where all sweetnesses are hid,
 Where thy voice, my tender-hearted,
 Will not lift up either lid.

Cry, O lover,
 Love is over!
 Cry, beneath the cypress green,
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen!'

XI

When the angelus is ringing,
 Near the convent will you walk,
 And recall the choral singing
 Which brought angels down our talk?
 Spirit-shriven
 I viewed Heaven,
 Till you smiled—'Is earth unclean,
 Sweetest eyes were ever seen?'

XII

When beneath the palace-lattice
 You ride slow as you have done,
 And you see a face there that is
 Not the old familiar one,—
 Will you oftly
 Murmur softly,
 'Here ye watched me morn and e'en,
 Sweetest eyes were ever seen!'

XIII

When the palace-ladies, sitting
 Round your gittern, shall have said,
 'Poet, sing those verses written
 For the lady who is dead,'
 Will you tremble
 Yet dissemble,—
 Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen?'

XIV

'Sweetest eyes!' how sweet in flowings
 The repeated cadence is!
 Though you sang a hundred poems,
 Still the best one would be this.
 I can hear it
 'Twixt my spirit
 And the earth-noise intervene—
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen!'

XV

But the priest waits for the praying,
 And the choir are on their knees,
 And the soul must pass away in
 Strains more solemn-high than these.
 Miserere
 For the weary!
 Oh, no longer for Catrine
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen!'

XVI

Keep my riband, take and keep it,
 (I have loosed it from my hair)
 Feeling, while you overweep it,
 Not alone in your despair,
 Since with saintly
 Watch unfaintly
 Out of heaven shall o'er you lean
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen.'

XVII

But—but *now*—yet unremovèd
 Up to heaven, they glisten fast;
 You may cast away, Belovèd,
 In your future all my past:

Such old phrases
 May be praises
 For some fairer bosom-queen—
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen!'

XVIII

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
 Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss
 If a tear be of your showing,
 Dropt for any hope of HIS!
 Death has boldness
 Besides coldness,
 If unworthy tears demean
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen.'

XIX

I will look out to his future;
 I will bless it till it shine.
 Should he ever be a suitor
 Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
 Sunshine gild them,
 Angels shield them,
 Whatsoever eyes terrene
 Be the sweetest HIS have seen!

A PORTRAIT

'One name is Elizabeth.'—*Ben Jonson.*

I will paint her as I see her.
 Ten times have the lilies blown
 Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear.
 Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty
 To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encolored faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air:

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient, waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,
As young birds, or early wheat
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures, for the rest,
Which come softly—just as she,
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks,—
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels (you feel) the sun.

And her smile it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more far
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
 He would sing of her with falls
 Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
 He would paint her unaware
 With a halo round the hair.

And if reader read the poem,
 He would whisper 'You have done a
 Consecrated little Una.'

And a dreamer (did you show him
 That same picture) would exclaim,
 'T is my angel, with a name!

And a stranger, when he sees her
 In the street even, smileth stilly,
 Just as you would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
 Soften, sleeken every word,
 As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
 The hard earth, whereon she passes,
 With the thymy-scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray 'God love her!'
 Ay and always, in good sooth,
 We may all be sure HE DOETH.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING

I

Sleep on, baby, on the floor,
 Tired of all the playing:
 Sleep with smile the sweeter for
 That, you dropped away in.

On your curls' full roundness stand
 Golden lights serenely;
 One cheek, pushed out by the hand
 Folds the dimple inly:
 Little head and little foot
 Heavy laid for pleasure,
 Underneath the lids half shut
 Slants the shining azure.
 Open-soul in noonday sun,
 So you lie and slumber:
 Nothing evil having done,
 Nothing can encumber.

II

I, who cannot sleep as well,
 Shall I sigh to view you?
 Or sigh further to foretell
 All that may undo you?
 Nay, keep smiling, little child,
 Ere the sorrow neareth:
 I will smile too! patience mild
 Pleasure's token weareth.
 Nay, keep sleeping before loss:
 I shall sleep though losing!
 As by cradle, so by cross,
 Sure is the reposing.

III

And God knows who sees us twain,
 Child at childish leisure,
 I am near as tired of pain
 As you seem of pleasure.
 Very soon too, by his grace
 Gently wrapt around me,
 Shall I show as calm a face,
 Shall I sleep as soundly.
 Differing in this, that you
 Clasp your playthings, sleeping,

While my hand shall drop the few
 Given to my keeping:
 Differing in this, that I
 Sleeping shall be colder,
 And in waking presently,
 Brighter to beholder:
 Differing in this beside—
 (Sleeper, have you heard me?
 Do you move, and open wide
 Eyes of wonder toward me?)—
 That while you I thus recall
 From your sleep, I solely,
 Me from mine an angel shall,
 With reveille holy.

WINE OF CYPRUS

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR OF 'SELECT
 PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK FATHERS,' ETC.

To whom these stanzas are addressed

I

If old Bacchus were the speaker,
 He would tell you with a sigh
 Of the Cyprus in this beaker
 I am sipping like a fly,—
 Like a fly or gnat on Ida
 At the hour of goblet-pledge,
 By queen Juno brushed aside, a
 Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

II

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler
 When the drink is so divine,
 And some deep-mouthed Greek exemplar
 Would become your Cyprus wine:

Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,
 While his one eye overleered,
 Nor too large were mouth of Titan
 Drinking rivers down his beard.

III

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
 That his ears alone pricked out,
 Fauns around him pressing, leaping,
 Each one pointing to his throat:
 While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
 Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
 Cry, 'O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
 Springs to keep, of such a taste!'

IV

But for me, I am not worthy
 After gods and Greeks to drink,
 And my lips are pale and earthy
 To go bathing from this brink:
 Since you heard them speak the last time,
 They have faded from their blooms,
 And the laughter of my pastime
 Has learnt silence at the tombs.

V

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers
 Crowned the cup and crowned the brow
 Can I answer the old thinkers
 In the forms they thought of, now?
 Who will fetch from garden-closes
 Some new garlands while I speak,
 That the forehead, crowned with roses,
 May strike scarlet down the cheek?

VI

Do not mock me! with my mortal
 Suits no wreath again, indeed;
 I am sad-voiced as the turtle
 Which Anacreon used to feed:
 Yet as that same bird demurely
 Wet her beak in cup of his,
 So, without a garland, surely
 I may touch the brim of this.

VII

Go,—let others praise the Chian!
 This is soft as Muses' string,
 This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
 This is rapid as his spring,
 Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
 Light as ever trod her feet;
 And the brown bees of Hymettus
 Make their honey not so sweet.

VIII

Very copious are my praises,
 Though I sip it like a fly!
 Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
 Change before me suddenly:
 As Ulysses' old libation
 Drew the ghosts from every part,
 So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
 Stirs the Hades of my heart.

IX

And I think of those long mornings
 Which my thought goes far to seek,
 When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
 Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek:

Past the pane the mountain spreading,
 Swept the sheep's-bell's tinkling noise,
 While a girlish voice was reading,
 Somewhat low for α's and ο's.

X

Then, what golden hours were for us!
 While we sat together there,
 How the white vests of the chorus
 Seemed to wave up a live air!
 How the cothurns trod majestic
 Down the deep iambic lines,
 And the rolling anapæstic
 Curled like vapor over shrines!

XI

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous,
 How he drove the bolted breath
 Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
 In the gnarlèd oak beneath!
 Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
 Who was born to monarch's place,
 And who made the whole world loyal
 Less by kingly power than grace!

XII

Our Euripides, the human,
 With his droppings of warm tears,
 And his touches of things common
 Till they rose to touch the spheres!
 Our Theocritus, our Bion,
 And our Pindar's shining goals!—
 These were cup-bearers undying
 Of the wine that 's meant for souls.

XIII

And my Plato, the divine one,
 If men know the gods aright
 By their motions as they shine on
 With a glorious trail of light!
 And your noble Christian bishops,
 Who mouthed grandly the last Greek!
 Though the sponges on their hyssops
 Were distent with wine—too weak.

XIV

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him
 As a liberal mouth of gold;
 And your Basil, you upraised him
 To the height of speakers old:
 And we both praised Heliodorus
 For his secret of pure lies,—
 Who forged first his linkèd stories
 In the heat of ladies' eyes.

XV

And we both praised your Synesius
 For the fire shot up his odes,
 Though the Church was scarce propitious
 As he whistled dogs and gods.
 And we both praised Nazianzen
 For the fervid heart and speech:
 Only I eschewed his glancing
 At the lyre hung out of reach.

XVI

Do you mind that deed of Atè
 Which you bound me to so fast,—
 Reading 'De Virginitate,'
 From the first line to the last?

How I said at ending, solemn
 As I turned and looked at you,
 That Saint Simeon on the column
 Had had somewhat less to do?

XVII

For we sometimes gently wrangled,
 Very gently, be it said,
 Since our thoughts were disentangled
 By no breaking of the thread!
 And I charged you with extortions
 On the nobler fames of old—
 Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
 Stained the purple they would fold.

XVIII

For the rest—a mystic moaning
 Kept Cassandra at the gate,
 With wild eyes the vision shone in,
 And wide nostrils scenting fate.
 And Prometheus, bound in passion
 By brute Force to the blind stone,
 Showed us looks of invocation
 Turned to ocean and the sun.

XIX

And Medea we saw burning
 At her nature's planted stake:
 And proud Œdipus fate-scorning
 While the cloud came on to break—
 While the cloud came on slow, slower,
 Till he stood discrowned, resigned!—
 But the reader's voice dropped lower
 When the poet called him BLIND.

XX

Ah, my gossip! you were older,
 And more learnèd, and a man!
 Yet that shadow, the enfolder
 Of your quiet eyelids, ran
 Both our spirits to one level;
 And I turned from hill and lea
 And the summer-sun's green revel,
 To your eyes that could not see.

XXI

Now Christ bless you with the one light
 Which goes shining night and day!
 May the flowers which grow in sunlight
 Shed their fragrance in your way!
 Is it not right to remember
 All your kindness, friend of mine,
 When we two sat in the chamber,
 And the poets poured us wine?

XXII

So, to come back to the drinking
 Of this Cyprus,—it is well,
 But those memories, to my thinking,
 Make a better œnomel;
 And whoever be the speaker,
 None can murmur with a sigh
 That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
 I am sipping like a fly.

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST

'So the dreams depart,
 So the fading phantoms flee,
 And the sharp reality
 Now must act its part.'

WESTWOOD'S *Beads from a Rosary*.

I

Little Ellie sits alone
 'Mid the beeches of a meadow,
 By a stream-side on the grass,
 And the trees are showering down
 Doubles of their leaves in shadow
 On her shining hair and face.

II

She has thrown her bonnet by,
 And her feet she has been dipping
 In the shallow water's flow:
 Now she holds them nakedly
 In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
 While she rocketh to and fro.

III

Little Ellie sits alone,
 And the smile she softly uses
 Fills the silence like a speech,
 While she thinks what shall be done,
 And the sweetest pleasure chooses
 For her future within reach.

IV

Little Ellie in her smile
 Chooses—'I will have a lover
 Riding on a steed of steeds:

He shall love me without guile,
 And to *him* I will discover
 The swan's nest among the reeds.

V

'And the steed shall be red-roan,
 And the lover shall be noble,
 With an eye that takes the breath:
 And the lute he plays upon
 Shall strike ladies into trouble,
 As his sword strikes men to death.

VI

'And the steed it shall be shod
 All in silver, housed in azure,
 And the mane shall swim the wind;
 And the hoofs along the sod
 Shall flash onward and keep measure,
 Till the shepherds look behind.

VII

'But my lover will not prize
 All the glory that he rides in,
 When he gazes in my face:
 He will say, "O Love, thine eyes
 Build the shrine my soul abides in,
 And I kneel here for thy grace!"

VIII

'Then, ay, then he shall kneel low,
 With the red-roan steed anear him
 Which shall seem to understand,
 Till I answer, "Rise and go!
 For the world must love and fear him
 Whom I gift with heart and hand."

IX

"Then he will arise so pale,
 I shall feel my own lips tremble
 With a *yes* I must not say,
 Nathless maiden-brave, "Farewell,"
 I will utter, and dissemble—
 "Light to-morrow with to-day!"

X

"Then he 'll ride among the hills
 To the wide world past the river,
 There to put away all wrong;
 To make straight distorted wills,
 And to empty the broad quiver
 Which the wicked bear along.

XI

"Three times shall a young foot-page
 Swim the stream and climb the mountain
 And kneel down beside my feet—
 "Lo, my master sends this gage,
 Lady, for thy pity's counting!
 What wilt thou exchange for it?"

XII

"And the first time I will send
 A white rosebud for a guerdon,
 And the second time, a glove;
 But the third time—I may bend
 From my pride, and answer—"Pardon
 If he comes to take my love."

XIII

"Then the young foot-page will run,
 Then my lover will ride faster,
 Till he kneeleth at my knee:

"I am a duke's eldest son,
 Thousand serfs do call me master,
 But, O Love, I love but *thee!*"

XIV

'He will kiss me on the mouth
 Then, and lead me as a lover
 Through the crowds that praise his deeds;
 And, when soul-tied by one troth,
 Unto *him* I will discover
 That swan's nest among the reeds.'

XV

Little Ellie, with her smile
 Not yet ended, rose up gaily,
 Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,
 And went homeward, round a mile,
 Just to see, as she did daily,
 What more eggs were with the two.

XVI

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
 Winding up the stream, light-hearted,
 Where the osier pathway leads,
 Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.
 Lo, the wild swan had deserted,
 And a rat had gnawed the reeds!

XVII

Ellie went home sad and slow.
 If she found the lover ever,
 With his red-roan steed of steeds,
 Sooth I know not; but I know
 She could never show him—never,
 That swan's nest among the reeds!

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE

‘To win the secret of a weed’s plain heart.’
—*Lowell.*

I

Mountain gorses, ever-golden,
Cankered not the whole year long!
Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as where ye grow?

II

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms,
Do ye teach us to be glad
When no summer can be had,
Blooming in our inward bosoms?
Ye, whom God preserveth still,
Set as lights upon a hill,
Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty liveth still!

III

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair
Canopied with azure air,
That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak?
Ye, who live on mountain peak,
Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek!

IV

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,—

For your teaching, ye should see us
 Bowing in prostration new!
 Whence arisen,—if one or two
 Drops be on our cheeks—O world, they are not tears but
 dew.

THE DEAD PAN

I

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
 Can ye listen in your silence?
 Can your mystic voices tell us
 Where ye hide? In floating islands,
 With a wind that evermore
 Keeps you out of sight of shore?
 Pan, Pan is dead.

II

In what revels are ye sunken
 In old Æthiopia?
 Have the Pygmies made you drunken,
 Bathing in mandragora
 Your divine pale lips that shiver
 Like the lotus in the river?
 Pan, Pan is dead.

III

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
 In gigantic Alpine rows?
 The black poppies out of number
 Nodding, dripping from your brows
 To the red lees of your wine,
 And so kept alive and fine?
 Pan, Pan is dead.

IV

Or lie crushed your stagnant corsés
 Where the silver spheres roll on,
 Stung to life by centric forces
 Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
 While the smoke of your old altars
 Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

V

'Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas'
 Said the old Hellenic tongue,—
 Said the hero-oaths, as well as
 Poets' songs the sweetest sung:
 Have ye grown deaf in a day?
 Can ye speak not yea or nay,
Since Pan is dead?

VI

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
 All alone, O Naiades,
 While your drenchèd locks dry slow in
 This cold feeble sun and breeze?
 Not a word the Naiads say,
 Though the rivers run for aye;
For Pan is dead.

VII

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
 O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
 At the rushing thunderstroke, would
 No sob tremble through the tree?
 Not a word the Dryads say,
 Though the forests wave for aye;
For Pan is dead.

VIII

Have ye left the mountain places,
 Oreads wild, for other tryst?
 Shall we see no sudden faces
 Strike a glory through the mist?
 Not a sound the silence thrills
 Of the everlasting hills:

Pan, Pan is dead.

IX

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
 Crowned to starry wanderings,
 With your chariots in procession
 And your silver clash of wings!
 Very pale ye seem to rise,
 Ghosts of Grecian deities,

Now Pan is dead!

X

Jove, that right hand is unloaded
 Whence the thunder did prevail,
 While in idiocy of godhead
 Thou art staring the stars pale
 And thine eagle, blind and old,
 Roughs his feathers in the cold.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XI

Where, O Juno, is the glory
 Of thy regal look and tread?
 Will they lay, for evermore, thee
 On thy dim, strait, golden bed?
 Will thy queendom all lie hid
 Meekly under either lid?

Pan, Pan is dead.

XII

Ha, Apollo! floats his golden
 Hair all mist-like where he stands,
 While the Muses hang enfolding
 Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
 'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
 Niobe looked lost as thou!
Pan, Pan is dead.

XIII

Shall the casque with its brown iron
 Pallas' broad blue eyes eclipse,
 And no hero take inspiring
 From the god-Greek of her lips?
 'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
 Mars the mighty, cursing it?
Pan, Pan is dead.

XIV

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
 He swoons, bound with his own vines;
 And his Mænads slowly saunter,
 Head aside, among the pines,
 While they murmur dreamingly
 'Evohe!—ah—evohe!—
Ah, Pan is dead!

XV

Neptune lies beside the trident,
 Dull and senseless as a stone;
 And old Pluto deaf and silent
 Is cast out into the sun:
 Ceres smileth stern thereat,
 'We *all* now are desolate—
Now Pan is dead.'

XX

In the fiery-hearted centre
 Of the solemn universe,
 Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
 To consume thee with this curse?
 Drop thy gray chin on thy knee,
 O thou palsied Mystery!
 For Pan is dead.

XXI

Gods, we vainly do adjure you,—
 Ye return nor voice nor sign!
 Not a votary could secure you
 Even a grave for your Divine:
 Not a grave, to show thereby
Here these gray old gods do lie.
 Pan, Pan is dead.

XXII

Even that Greece who took your wages
 Calls the obolus outworn;
 And the hoarse, deep-throated ages
 Laugh your godships unto scorn:
 And the poets do disclaim you,
 Or grow colder if they name you—
 And Pan is dead.

XXIII

Gods bereavèd, gods belated,
 With your purples rent asunder!
 Gods discrowned and desecrated,
 Disinherited of thunder!
 Now, the goats may climb and crop
 The soft grass on Ida's top—
 Now Pan is dead.

XXVIII

By the love, He stood alone in,
 His sole Godhead rose complete,
 And the false gods fell down moaning
 Each from off his golden seat;
 All the false gods with a cry
 Rendered up their deity—

Pan, Pan was dead.

XXIX

Wailing wide across the islands,
 They rent, vest-like, their Divine;
 And a darkness and a silence
 Quenched the light of every shrine;
 And Dodona's oak swang lonely
 Henceforth, to the tempest only:

Pan, Pan was dead.

XXX

Pythia staggered, feeling o'er her
 Her lost god's forsaking look;
 Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror
 And her crispy fillets shook
 And her lips gasped, through their foam,
 For a word that did not come.

Pan, Pan was dead.

XXXI

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
 Ye are silent evermore!
 And I dash down this old chalice
 Whence libations ran of yore.
 See, the wine crawls in the dust
 Wormlike—as your glories must,

Since Pan is dead.

XXXII

Get to dust, as common mortals,
 By a common doom and track!
 Let no Schiller from the portals
 Of that Hades call you back,
 Or instruct us to weep all
 At your antique funeral.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXIII

By your beauty, which confesses
 Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
 By our grand heroic guesses
 Through your falsehood at the True,—
 We will weep *not!* earth shall roll
 Heir to each god's aureole—

And Pan is dead.

XXXIV

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
 Sung beside her in her youth,
 And those debonair romances
 Sound but dull beside the truth.
 Phœbus' chariot-course is run:
 Look up, poets, to the sun!

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXV

Christ hath sent us down the angels;
 And the whole earth and the skies
 Are illumed by altar-candles
 Lit for blessèd mysteries;
 And a Priest's hand through creation
 Waveth calm and consecration:

And Pan is dead.

XXXVI

Truth is fair: should we forgo it?
 Can we sigh right for a wrong?
 God Himself is the best Poet,
 And the Real is his song.
 Sing his truth out fair and full,
 And secure his beautifull
 Let Pan be dead!

XXXVII

Truth is large: our aspiration
 Scarce embraces half we be.
 Shame, to stand in his creation
 And doubt truth's sufficiency!—
 To think God's song unexcelling
 The poor tales of our own telling—
 When Pan is dead!

XXXVIII

What is true and just and honest,
 What is lovely, what is pure,
 All of praise that hath admonisht,
 All of virtue,—shall endure;
 These are themes for poets' uses,
 Stirring nobler than the Muses,
 Ere Pan was dead.

XXXIX

O brave poets, keep back nothing,
 Nor mix falsehood with the whole!
 Look up Godward; speak the truth in
 Worthy song from earnest soul:
 Hold, in high poetic duty,
 Truest Truth the fairest Beauty!
 Pan, Pan is dead.

POEMS

1850

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT

I

I stand on the mark beside the shore
Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
And God was thanked for liberty.
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,
I bend my knee down on this mark:
I look on the sky and the sea.

II

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!
I see you come proud and slow
From the land of the spirits pale as dew
And round me and round me ye go.
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one
Who in your names works sin and woe!

III

And thus I thought that I would come
And kneel here where ye knelt before,
And feel your souls around me hum
In undertone to the ocean's roar;
And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this land
Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore.

IV

I am black, I am black,
 And yet God made me, they say:
 But if He did so, smiling back
 He must have cast his work away
 Under the feet of his white creatures,
 With a look of scorn, that the dusky features
 Might be trodden again to clay.

V

And yet He has made dark things
 To be glad and merry as light:
 There 's a little dark bird sits and sings,
 There 's a dark stream ripples out of sight,
 And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,
 And the sweetest stars are made to pass
 O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI

But *we* who are dark, we are dark!
 Ah God, we have no stars!
 About our souls in care and cark
 Our blackness shuts like prison-bars:
 The poor souls crouch so far behind
 That never a comfort can they find
 By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII

Indeed we live beneath the sky,
 That great smooth Hand of God stretched out
 On all his children fatherly,
 To save them from the dread and doubt
 Which would be if, from this low place,
 All opened straight up to his face
 Into the grand eternity.

VIII

And still God's sunshine and his frost,
 They make us hot, they make us cold,
 As if we were not black and lost;
 And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,
 Do fear and take us for very men:
 Could the whip-poor-will or the cat of the glen
 Look into my eyes and be bold?

IX

I am black, I am black!
 But, once, I laughed in girlish glee,
 For one of my color stood in the track
 Where the drivers drove, and looked at me,
 And tender and full was the look he gave—
 Could a slave look so at another slave?—
 I look at the sky and the sea.

X

And from that hour our spirits grew
 As free as if unsold, unbought:
 Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
 To conquer the world, we thought.
 The drivers drove us day by day;
 We did not mind, we went one way,
 And no better a freedom sought.

XI

In the sunny ground between the canes,
 He said 'I love you' as he passed;
 When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,
 I heard how he vowed it fast:
 While others shook he smiled in the hut,
 As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut
 Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII

I sang his name instead of a song,
 Over and over I sang his name,
 Upward and downward I drew it along
 My various notes,—the same, the same!
 I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
 Might never guess, from aught they could hear,
 It was only a name—a name.

XIII

I look on the sky and the sea.
 We were two to love and two to pray:
 Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
 Though nothing didst Thou say!
 Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun:
 And now I cry who am but one,
 Thou wilt not speak to-day.

XIV

We were black, we were black,
 We had no claim to love and bliss,
 What marvel if each went to wrack?
 They wrung my cold hands out of his,
 They dragged him—where? I crawled to touch
 His blood's mark in the dust . . . not much,
 Ye pilgrim-souls, though plain as *this!*

XV

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!
 Mere grief 's too good for such as I:
 So the white men brought the shame ere long
 To strangle the sob of my agony.
 They would not leave me for my dull
 Wet eyes!—it was too merciful
 To let me weep pure tears and die.

XVI

I am black, I am black!

I wore a child upon my breast,
 An amulet that hung too slack,
 And, in my unrest, could not rest:
 Thus we went moaning, child and mother,
 One to another, one to another,
 Until all ended for the best.

XVII

For hark! I will tell you low, low,
 I am black, you see,—
 And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
 Was far too white, too white for me;
 As white as the ladies who scorned to pray
 Beside me at church but yesterday,
 Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

XVIII

My own, own child! I could not bear
 To look in his face, it was so white;
 I covered him up with a kerchief there,
 I covered his face in close and tight:
 And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,
 For the white child wanted his liberty—
 Ha, ha! he wanted the master-right.

XIX

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,
 His little feet that never grew;
 He struck them out, as it was meet,
 Against my heart to break it through:
 I might have sung and made him mild,
 But I dared not sing to the white-faced child
 The only song I knew.

XX

I pulled the kerchief very close:
 He could not see the sun, I swear,
 More, then, alive, than now he does
 From between the roots of the mango . . . where?
 I know where. Close! A child and mother
 Do wrong to look at one another
 When one is black and one is fair.

XXI

Why, in that single glance I had
 Of my child's face, . . . I tell you all,
 I saw a look that made me mad!
 The *master's* look, that used to fall
 On my soul like his lash . . . or worsel
 And so, to save it from my curse,
 I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,
 He shivered from head to foot;
 Till after a time, he lay instead
 Too suddenly still and mute.
 I felt, beside, a stiffening cold:
 I dared to lift up just a fold,
 As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha!—there, had been
 (I laugh to think on 't at this hour!)
 Your fine white angels (who have seen
 Nearest the secret of God's power)
 And plucked my fruit to make them wine,
 And sucked the soul of that child of mine
 As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower.

XXIV

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white!
 They freed the white child's spirit so.
 I said not a word, but day and night
 I carried the body to and fro,
 And it lay on my heart like a stone, as chill.
 —The sun may shine out as much as he will;
 I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

XXV

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,
 I carried the little body on;
 The forest's arms did round us shut,
 And silence through the trees did run:
 They asked no question as I went,
 They stood too high for astonishment,
 They could see God sit on his throne.

XXVI

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
 I bore it on through the forest, on;
 And when I felt it was tired at last,
 I scooped a hole beneath the moon:
 Through the forest-tops the angels far,
 With a white sharp finger from every star,
 Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII

Yet when it was all done aright,—
 Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed,—
 All, changed to black earth,—nothing white,—
 A dark child in the dark!—ensued
 Some comfort, and my heart grew young;
 I sate down smiling there and sung
 The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII

And thus we two were reconciled,
 The white child and black mother, thus;
 For as I sang it soft and wild,
 The same song, more melodious,
 Rose from the grave whereon I sate:
 It was the dead child singing that,
 To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX

I look on the sea and the sky.
 Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay
 The free sun rideth gloriously,
 But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away
 Through the earliest streaks of the morn:
 My face is black, but it glares with a scorn
 Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX

Ha!—in their stead, their hunter sons!
 Ha, ha! they are on me—they hunt in a ring!
 Keep off! I brave you all at once,
 I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!
 You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think:
 Did you ever stand still in your triumph, and shrink
 From the stroke of her wounded wing?

XXXI

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!—)
 I wish you who stand there five abreast,
 Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
 A little corpse as safely at rest
 As mine in the mangoes! Yes, but *she*
 May keep live babies on her knee,
 And sing the song she likes the best.

XXXII

I am not mad: I am black.

I see you staring in my face—

I know you staring, shrinking back,

Ye are born of the Washington-race,

And this land is the free America,

And this mark on my wrist—(I prove what I say)

Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

XXXIII

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound!

I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun;

I only cursed them all around

As softly as I might have done

My very own child: from these sands

Up to the mountains, lift your hands,

O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV

Whips, curses; these must answer those!

For in this UNION you have set

Two kinds of men in adverse rows,

Each loathing each; and all forget

The seven wounds in Christ's body fair,

While HE sees gaping everywhere

Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXXV

Our wounds are different. Your white men

Are, after all, not gods indeed,

Nor able to make Christs again

Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed

(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!

We are too heavy for our cross,

And fall and crush you and your seed.

XXXVI

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky.
 The clouds are breaking on my brain;
 I am floated along, as if I should die
 Of liberty's exquisite pain.
 In the name of the white child waiting for me
 In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
 White men, I leave you all curse-free
 In my broken heart's disdain!

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN

I

Nine years old! The first of any
 Seem the happiest years that come:
 Yet when *I* was nine, I said
 No such word! I thought instead
 That the Greeks had used as many
 In besieging Ilium.

II

Nine green years had scarcely brought me
 To my childhood's haunted spring;
 I had life, like flowers and bees,
 In betwixt the country trees,
 And the sun the pleasure taught me
 Which he teacheth every thing.

III

If the rain fell, there was sorrow:
 Little head leant on the pane,
 Little finger drawing down it
 The long trailing drops upon it,
 And the 'Rain, rain, come to-morrow,'
 Said for charm against the rain.

IV

Such a charm was right Canidian,
 Though you meet it with a jeer!
 If I said it long enough,
 Then the rain hummed dimly off,
 And the thrush with his pure Lydian
 Was left only to the ear;

V

And the sun and I together
 Went a-rushing out of doors:
 We our tender spirits drew
 Over hill and dale in view,
 Glimmering hither, glimmering thither
 In the footsteps of the showers.

VI

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
 Through the grasses wet and fair,
 Straight I sought my garden-ground
 With the laurel on the mound,
 And the pear-tree oversweeping
 A side-shadow of green air.

VII

In the garden lay supinely
 A huge giant wrought of spade!
 Arms and legs were stretched at length
 In a passive giant strength,—
 The fine meadow turf, cut finely,
 Round them laid and interlaid.

VIII

Call him Hector, son of Priam!
 Such his title and degree.
 With my rake I smoothed his brow,
 Both his cheeks I weeded through,
 But a rhymer such as I am,
 Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
 Staring, winking at the skies:
 Nose of gillyflowers and box;
 Scented grasses put for locks,
 Which a little breeze at pleasure
 Set a-waving round his eyes:

X

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
 With a glitter toward the light;
 Purple violets for the mouth,
 Breathing perfumes west and south;
 And a sword of flashing lilies,
 Holden ready for the fight:

XI

And a breastplate made of daisies,
 Closely fitting, leaf on leaf;
 Periwinkles interlaced
 Drawn for belt about the waist;
 While the brown bees, humming praises,
 Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII

And who knows (I sometimes wondered)
 If the disembodied soul
 Of old Hector, once of Troy,

Might not take a dreary joy
 Here to enter—if it thundered,
 Rolling up the thunder-roll?

XIII

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
 In this body rude and rife
 Just to enter, and take rest
 'Neath the daisies of the breast—
 They, with tender roots, renewing
 His heroic heart to life?

XIV

Who could know? I sometimes started
 At a motion or a sound!
 Did his mouth speak—naming Troy
 With an *otototoi*?
 Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
 Make the daisies tremble round?

XV

It was hard to answer, often:
 But the birds sang in the tree,
 But the little birds sang bold
 In the pear-tree green and old,
 And my terror seemed to soften
 Through the courage of their glee.

XVI

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
 And white blossoms sleek with rain!
 Oh, my garden rich with pansies!
 Oh, my childhood's bright romances!
 All revive, like Hector's body,
 And I see them stir again.

XVII

And despite life's changes, chances,
 And despite the deathbell's toll,
 They press on me in full seeming
 Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!
 As the birds sang in the branches,
 Sing God's patience through my soul!

XVIII

That no dreamer, no neglecter
 Of the present's work unsped,
 I may wake up and be doing,
 Life's heroic ends pursuing,
 Though my past is dead as Hector,
 And though Hector is twice dead.

SONNETS

FLUSH OR FAUNUS

You see this dog; it was but yesterday
 I mused forgetful of his presence here,
 Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear:
 When from the pillow where wet-cheeked I lay,
 A head as hairy as Faunus thrust its way
 Right sudden against my face, two golden-clear
 Great eyes astonished mine, a drooping ear
 Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray!
 I started first as some Arcadian
 Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove:
 But as the bearded vision closelier ran
 My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
 Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true PAN
 Who by low creatures leads to heights of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE

The wind sounds only in opposing straits,
 The sea, beside the shore; man's spirit rends
 Its quiet only up against the ends
 Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,
 Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,
 And losing by the loss it apprehends,
 The flesh rocks round and every breath it sends
 Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states
 Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah Lord,
 Make room for rest, around me! out of sight
 Now float me of the vexing land abhorred,
 Till in deep calms of space my soul may right
 Her nature, shoot large sail on lengthening cord,
 And rush exultant on the Infinite.

TWO SKETCHES

I

H. B.

The shadow of her face upon the wall
 May take your memory to the perfect Greek,
 But when you front her, you would call the cheek
 Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
 That bloom it wears could leave you critical,
 And that smile reaching toward the rosy streak;
 For one who smiles so has no need to speak
 To lead your thoughts along, as steed to stall.
 A smile that turns the sunny side o' the heart
 On all the world, as if herself did win
 By what she lavished on an open mart!
 Let no man call the liberal sweetness, sin,—
 For friends may whisper as they stand apart,
 'Methinks there's still some warmer place within.'

II

A. B.

Her azure eyes, dark lashes hold in fee;
 Her fair superfluous ringlets without check
 Drop after one another down her neck,
 As many to each cheek as you might see
 Green leaves to a wild rose; this sign outwardly,
 And a like woman-covering seems to deck
 Her inner nature, for she will not fleck
 World's sunshine with a finger. Sympathy
 Must call her in Love's name! and then, I know,
 She rises up, and brightens as she should,
 And lights her smile for comfort, and is slow
 In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
 To smell this flower, come near it! such can grow
 In that sole garden where Christ's brow dropped blood.

MOUNTAINEER AND POET

The simple goatherd between Alp and sky,
 Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,
 Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
 Esteems not his own stature larger by
 The apparent image, but more patiently
 Strikes his staff down beneath his clenching fist,
 While the snow-mountains lift their amethyst
 And sapphire crowns of splendor, far and nigh,
 Into the air around him. Learn from hence
 Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue
 Your way still onward up to eminence!
 Ye are not great because creation drew
 Large revelations round your earliest sense,
 Nor bright because God's glory shines for you.

THE POET

The poet hath the child's sight in his breast
 And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed
 He views with the first glory. Fair and good
 Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
 But stand before him holy and undressed
 In week-day false conventions, such as would
 Drag other men down from the altitude
 Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
 Why, God would tire of all his heavens, as soon
 As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst
 Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon!
 And therefore hath He set thee in the midst
 Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune
 And praise his world for ever, as thou bidst.

HIRAM POWERS' 'GREEK SLAVE'

They say Ideal beauty cannot enter
 The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
 An alien Image with enshackled hands,
 Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her
 (That passionless perfection which he lent her,
 Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)
 To so confront man's crimes in different lands
 With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
 Art's fiery finger, and break up ere long
 The serfdom of this world. Appeal, fair stone,
 From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!
 Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
 East griefs but west, and strike and shame the strong,
 By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

LIFE

Each creature holds an insular point in space;
 Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a sound,
 But all the multitudinous beings round
 In all the countless worlds with time and place
 For their conditions, down to the central base,
 Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
 Life answering life across the vast profound,
 In full antiphony, by a common grace?
 I think this sudden joyance which illumines
 A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run
 From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs:
 I think this passionate sigh, which half-begun
 I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes
 Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

LOVE

We cannot live, except thus mutually
 We alternate, aware or unaware,
 The reflex act of life: and when we bear
 Our virtue outward most impulsively,
 Most full of invocation, and to be
 Most instantly compellant, certes there
 We live most life, whoever breathes most air
 And counts his dying years by sun and sea.
 But when a soul, by choice and conscience, doth
 Throw out her full force on another soul,
 The conscience and the concentration both
 Make mere life, Love. For Life in perfect whole
 And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,
 As Nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.

HEAVEN AND EARTH

And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour.'

God, who with thunders and great voices kept
 Beneath thy throne, and stars most silver-paced
 Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced
 Melodious angels round, canst intercept
 Music with music,—yet, at will, has swept
 All back, all back (said he in Patmos placed,)
 To fill the heavens with silence of the waste
 Which lasted half an hour! Lo, I who have wept
 All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,
 And by that dread response of curse and groan
 Men alternate across these hemispheres,
 Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,
 In compensation for our stormy years:
 As heaven has paused from song, let earth from moan!

THE PROSPECT

Methinks we do as fretful children do,
 Leaning their faces on the window-pane
 To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,
 And shut the sky and landscape from their view:
 And thus, alas, since God the maker drew
 A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,—
 The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,—
 We miss the prospect which we are called unto
 By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,
 O man, my brother! Hold thy sobbing breath,
 And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong!
 That so, as life's appointment issueth,
 Thy vision may be clear to watch along
 The sunset consummation-lights of death.

HUGH STUART BOYD

HIS BLINDNESS

To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of 'Cyprus Wine.' There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848; Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier in this than the absent), fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sat by the deathbed of her father's friend and hers.—E. B. B.

God would not let the spheric lights accost
 This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off
 With all her beckoning hills whose golden stuff
 Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.
 Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—
 Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,
 To catch fair visions rendered full enough
 By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—
 Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,
 Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's Spring,
 And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eves:
 Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seemed one thing,
 Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves
 Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on the wing.

HUGH STUART BOYD

HIS DEATH, 1848

Belovèd friend, who living many years
 With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,
 Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune
 To visible nature's elemental cheers!

God has not caught thee to new hemispheres
 Because thou wast weary of this one;—
 I think thine angel's patience first was done,
 And that he spake out with celestial tears,
 'Is it enough, dear God? then lighten so
 This soul that smiles in darkness!'

Steadfast friend,

Who never didst my heart or life misknow,
 Nor either's faults too keenly apprehend,—
 How can I wonder when I see thee go
 To join the Dead found faithful to the end?

HUGH STUART BOYD

LEGACIES

Three gifts the Dying left me,—Æschylus,
 And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock
 Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock
 Of stars whose motion is melodious.
 The books were those I used to read from, thus
 Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
 The darkness of his eyes; now, mine they mock,
 Blinded in turn by tears; now, murmurous
 Sad echoes of my young voice, years ago
 Intoning from these leaves the Grecian phrase,
 Return and choke my utterance. Books, lie down
 In silence on the shelf there, within gaze;
 And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
 Chime in the day which ends these parting-days!

CONFESSIONS

I

Face to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her:
 God and she and I only, there I sat down to draw her
 Soul through the clefts of confession: 'Speak, I am holding
 thee fast,

As the angel of resurrection shall do at the last!

‘My cup is blood-red

With my sin,’ she said,

‘And I pour it out to the bitter lees,

As if the angels of judgment stood over me strong at the last,
Or as thou wert as these.’

II

When God smote his hands together, and struck out thy soul
as a spark

Into the organized glory of things, from deeps of the dark,—
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn, didst thou honor the
power in the form,

As the star does at night, or the fire-fly, or even the little
ground-worm?

‘I have sinned,’ she said,

‘For my seed-light shed

Has smouldered away from his first decrees.

The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the ground-leaf praiseth the
worm;

I am viler than these.’

III

When God on that sin had pity, and did not trample thee
straight

With his wild rains beating and drenching thy light found in-
adequate;

When He only sent thee the north-wind, a little searching and
chill,

To quicken thy flame—didst thou kindle and flash to the
heights of his will?

‘I have sinned,’ she said,

‘Unquickened, unspread,

My fire dropt down, and I wept on my knees:

I only said of his winds of the north as I shrank from their chill,
What delight is in these?’

IV

When God on that sin had pity, and did not meet it as such,
But tempered the wind to thy uses, and softened the world to
thy touch,

At least thou wast moved in thy soul, though unable to prove
it afar,

Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel, not giving it out like
a star?

‘I have sinned,’ she said,

‘And not merited

The gift He gives, by the grace He sees!

The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the hillside praiseth the star;
I am viler than these.’

V

Then I cried aloud in my passion,—Unthankful and impotent
creature,

To throw up thy scorn unto God through the rents in thy
beggarly nature!

If He, the all-giving and loving, is served so unduly, what then
Hast thou done to the weak and the false and the changing,—
thy fellows of men?

‘I have *loved*,’ she said,

(Words bowing her head

As the wind the wet acacia-trees)

‘I saw God sitting above me, but I . . . I sat among men,
And I have loved these.’

VI

Again with a lifted voice, like a choral trumpet that takes
The lowest note of a viol that trembles, and triumphing breaks
On the air with it solemn and clear,—‘Behold! I have sinned
not in this!

Where I loved, I have loved much and well,—I have verily
loved not amiss.

Let the living,’ she said,

‘Inquire of the dead,
 In the house of the pale-fronted images.
 My own true dead will answer for me, that I have not loved
 amiss
 In my love for all these.

VII

‘The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep it by day
 and by night;
 Their least step on the stair, at the door, still throbs through
 me, if ever so light;
 Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, far off in the
 long-ago years,
 Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and seen through the
 crystals of tears.
 Dig the snow,’ she said,
 ‘For my churchyard bed,
 Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,
 If one only of these my beloveds shall love me with heart-warm
 tears,
 As I have loved these!

VIII

‘If I angered any among them, from thenceforth my own life
 was sore;
 If I fell by chance from their presence, I clung to their memory
 more:
 Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I sometimes called
 sweet;
 And whenever their heart has refused me, I fell down straight
 at their feet.
 I have loved,’ she said,—
 ‘Man is weak, God is dread,
 Yet the weak man dies with his spirit at ease,
 Having poured such an unguent of love but once on the Sav-
 iour’s feet
 As I lavished for these.’

IX

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the Human, and left the Divine!
Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee their wild-
berry wine?

Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers ap-
proached thee with blame,

Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and loved thee
the same?

But she shrunk and said

'God, over my head,

Must sweep in the wrath of his judgment-seas,

If *He* shall deal with me sinning, but only indeed the same

And no gentler than these.'

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA

I

The ship went on with solemn face;

To meet the darkness on the deep,

The solemn ship went onward:

I bowed down weary in the place,

For parting tears and present sleep

Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

II

Thick sleep which shut all dreams from me,

And kept my inner self apart

And quiet from emotion,

Then brake away and left me free,

Made conscious of a human heart

Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

III

The new sight, the new wondrous sight!
 The waters round me, turbulent,
 The skies impassive o'er me,
 Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
 Half glorified by that intent
 Of holding the day-glory!

IV

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
 The meeting line of sea and sky,
 With aspect still and mystic:
 I think they did foresee the sun,
 And rested on their prophecy
 In quietude majestic,

V

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,
 Like statues by the open tomb
 Of shining saints half risen.
 The sun!—he came up to be viewed,
 And sky and sea made mighty room
 To inaugurate the vision.

VI

I oft had seen the dawnlight run
 As red wine through the hills, and break
 Through many a mist's inurning;
 But, here, no earth profaned the sun:
 Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
 The sacrament of morning.

VII

Away with thoughts fantastical!
 I would be humble to my worth,
 Self-guarded as self-doubted:

Though here no earthly shadows fall,
 I, joying, grieving without earth,
 May desecrate without it.

VIII

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves;
 I would not praise the pageant high
 Yet miss the dedicature:
 I, carried toward the sunless graves
 By force of natural things,—should I
 Exult in only Nature?

IX

And could I bear to sit alone
 'Mid Nature's fixed benignities,
 While my warm pulse was moving?
 Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
 Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
 To satisfy the loving!

X

It seems a better lot than so,
 To sit with friends beneath the beech,
 And feel them dear and dearer;
 Or follow children as they go
 In pretty pairs, with softened speech,
 As the church-bells ring nearer.

XI

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day!
 The sea sings round me while ye roll
 Afar the hymn unaltered,
 And kneel, where once I knelt to pray,
 And bless me deeper in the soul,
 Because the voice has faltered.

XII

And though this sabbath comes to me
 Without the stolèd minister
 Or chanting congregation,
 God's Spirit brings communion, He
 Who brooded soft on waters drear,
 Creator on creation.

XIII

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher
 Where keep the saints with harp and song
 An endless sabbath morning,
 And on that sea commixed with fire
 Oft drop their eyelids, raised too long
 To the full Godhead's burning.

THE MASK

I

I have a smiling face, she said,
 I have a jest for all I meet,
 I have a garland for my head
 And all its flowers are sweet,—
 And so you call me gay, she said.

II

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
 And Wrong did teach this jesting bold;
 These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
 While a death-chime was tolled:
 And what now will you say?—she said.

III

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
 Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
 Live captives so uncomforted
 As souls behind a smile.
 God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV

I know my face is bright, she said,—
 Such brightness dying suns diffuse:
 I bear upon my forehead shed
 The sign of what I lose,
 The ending of my day, she said.

V

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
 And take a moan upon my mouth,
 And tie a cypress round my head,
 And let my tears run smooth,
 It were the happier way, she said.

VI

And since that must not be, she said,
 I fain your bitter world would leave.
 How calmly, calmly smile the Dead,
 Who do not, therefore, grieve!
 The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

VII

But in your bitter world, she said,
 Face-joy 's a costly mask to wear;
 'T is bought with pangs long nourishèd,
 And rounded to despair:
 Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

VIII

Ye weep for those who weep? she said—
 Ah fools! I bid you pass them by.
 Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled
 What time their eyes were dry.
 Whom sadder can I say? she said.

CALLS ON THE HEART

I

Free Heart, that singest to-day
 Like a bird on the first green spray,
 Wilt thou go forth to the world
 Where the hawk hath his wing unfurled
 To follow, perhaps, thy way?
 Where the tamer thine own will bind,
 And, to make thee sing, will blind,
 While the little hip grows for the free behind?
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —'No, no!
 Free hearts are better so.'

II

The world, thou hast heard it told,
 Has counted its robber-gold,
 And the pieces stick to the hand;
 The world goes riding it fair and grand,
 While the truth is bought and sold;
 World-voices east, world-voices west,
 They call thee, Heart, from thine early rest,
 'Come hither, come hither and be our guest.'
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —'No, no!
 Good hearts are calmer so.'

III

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's Strife,
 With a golden heft to his knife;
 World's Mirth, with a finger fine
 That draws on a board in wine
 Her blood-red plans of life;
 World's Gain, with a brow knit down;
 World's Fame, with a laurel crown
 Which rustles most as the leaves turn brown:
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —'No, no!
 Calm hearts are wiser so.'

IV

Hast heard that Proserpina
 (Once fooling) was snatched away
 To partake the dark king's seat,
 And the tears ran fast on her feet
 To think how the sun shone yesterday?
 With her ankles sunken in asphodel
 She wept for the roses of earth which fell
 From her lap when the wild car drave to hell.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —'No, no!
 Wise hearts are warmer so.'

V

And what is this place not seen,
 Where Hearts may hide serene?
 'T is a fair still house well-kept
 Which humble thoughts have swept
 And holy prayers made clean.
 There I sit with Love in the sun,
 And we two never have done
 Singing sweeter songs than are guessed by *one*.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —'No, no!
 Warm hearts are fuller so.'

VI

O Heart, O Love,—I fear
 That Love may be kept too near.
 Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,
 How Love may be false and frail
 To a Heart once holden dear?
 —‘But this true Love of mine
 Clings fast as the clinging vine,
 And mingles pure as the grapes in wine.’
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —‘No, no!
 Full hearts beat higher so.’

VII

O Heart, O Love, beware!
 Look up, and boast not there,
 For who has twirled at the pin?
 ’T is the World, between Death and Sin,—
 The World and the World’s Despair!
 And Death has quickened his pace
 To the hearth, with a mocking face,
 Familiar as Love, in Love’s own place.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 ‘Still, no!
 High hearts must grieve even so.’

VIII

The house is waste to-day,
 The leaf has dropt from the spray,
 The thorn, prickt through to the song:
 If summer doeth no wrong,
 The winter will, they say.
 Sing, Heart! What heart replies?
 In vain we were calm and wise,
 If the tears unkind stand on in our eyes.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —‘Ah, no!
 Grieved hearts must break even so.’

IX

Howbeit all is not lost.
 The warm noon ends in frost,
 And worldly tongues of promise
 Like sheep-bells die off from us
 On the desert hills cloud-crossed:
 Yet through the silence shall
 Pierce the death-angel's call,
 And 'Come up hither,' recover all.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —I go!
 Broken hearts triumph so.'

WISDOM UNAPPLIED

I

If I were thou, O butterfly,
 And poised my purple wing to spy
 The sweetest flowers that live and die,

II

I would not waste my strength on those,
 As thou,—for summer has a close,
 And pansies bloom not in the snows.

III

If I were thou, O working bee,
 And all that honey-gold I see
 Could delve from roses easily,

IV

I would not hive it at man's door,
 As thou,—that heirdom of my store
 Should make him rich and leave me poor.

V

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
And screamed the thunder back aloud,
And faced the lightning from the cloud,

VI

I would not build my eyrie-throne,
As thou,—upon a crumbling stone
Which the next storm may trample down.

VII

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
With pawing hoof and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

VIII

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain.

IX

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut-up window heard,
Like Love's sweet Yes too long deferred,

X

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight
Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade
As thus, methought, an angel said,—

XII

'If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others, and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong,

XIII

'I would not waste my cares, and choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

XIV

'I would not work where none can win,
As *thou*,—halfway 'twixt grief and sin,
But look above and judge within.

XV

'I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*,—towards fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

XVI

'I would not champ the hard cold bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks fit,
But take God's freedom, using it.

XVII

'I would not play earth's winter out,
As *thou*,—but gird my soul about,
And live for life past death and doubt.

XVIII

'Then sing, O singer!—but allow,
Beast, fly and bird, called foolish now,
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as *thou*.'

HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY

I

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
We build the house where we may rest,
And then, at moments, suddenly
We look up to the great wide sky,
Inquiring wherefore we were born,
For earnest or for jest?

II

The senses folding thick and dark
About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond;
We strike out blindly to a mark
Believed in, but not seen.

III

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twine about God's seat:
While, freshening upward to his feet,
In gradual growth his full-leaved will
Expands from world to world.

IV

And, in the tumult and excess
Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
Through all things that are done.

V

God keeps his holy mysteries
 Just on the outside of man's dream;
 In diapason slow, we think
 To hear their pinions rise and sink,
 While they float pure beneath his eyes,
 Like swans adown a stream.

VI

Abstractions, are they, from the forms
 Of his great beauty?—exaltations
 From his great glory?—strong previsions
 Of what we shall be?—intuitions
 Of what we are—in calms and storms
 Beyond our peace and passions?

VII

Things nameless! which, in passing so,
 Do stroke us with a subtle grace;
 We say, 'Who passes?'—they are dumb;
 We cannot see them go or come,
 Their touches fall soft, cold, as snow
 Upon a blind man's face.

VIII

Yet, touching so, they draw above
 Our common thoughts to Heaven's unknown;
 Our daily joy and pain advance
 To a divine significance
 Our human love—O mortal love,
 That light is not its own!

IX

And sometimes horror chills our blood
 To be so near such mystic Things,
 And we wrap round us for defence

Our purple manners, moods of sense—
 As angels from the face of God
 Stand hidden in their wings.

X

And sometimes through life's heavy swound
 We grope for them, with strangled breath
 We stretch our hands abroad and try
 To reach them in our agony;
 And widen, so, the broad life-wound
 Soon large enough for death.

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD

I

They say that God lives very high;
 But if you look above the pines
 You cannot see our God; and why?

II

And if you dig down in the mines
 You never see Him in the gold;
 Though from Him all that 's glory shines.

III

God is so good, He wears a fold
 Of heaven and earth across his face—
 Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

IV

But still I feel that his embrace
 Slides down by thrills, through all things made,
 Through sight and sound of every place:

V

As if my tender mother laid
 On my shut lips her kisses' pressure,
 Half-waking me at night, and said
 'Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser?'

THE CLAIM

I

Grief sate upon a rock and sighed one day,
 (Sighing is all her rest,)
 'Wellaway, wellaway, ah wellaway!
 As ocean beat the stone, did she her breast,
 'Ah wellaway! ah mel alas, ah mel'
 Such sighing uttered she.

II

A Cloud spake out of heaven, as soft as rain
 That falls on water,—'Lo,
 The winds have wandered from me! I remain
 Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot go
 To lean my whiteness on the mountain blue
 Till wanted for more dew.

III

'The sun has struck my brain to weary peace,
 Whereby constrained and pale
 I spin for him a larger golden fleece
 Than Jason's, yearning for as full a sail.
 Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighèd to thy mind,
 Give me a sigh for wind,

IV

'And let it carry me adown the west!
 But Love, who pròstrated
 Lay at Grief's foot, his lifted eyes possessed
 Of her full image, answered in her stead;
 'Now nay, now nay! she shall not give away
 What is my wealth, for any Cloud that flieth:
 Where Grief makes moan,
 Love claims his own,
 And therefore do I lie here night and day,
 And eke my life out with the breath she sigheth.'

A DEAD ROSE

I

O Rose, who dares to name thee?
 No longer roseate now, nor soft nor sweet,
 But pale and hard and dry as stubble wheat,—
 Kept seven years in a drawer, thy titles shame thee.

II

The breeze that used to blow thee
 Between the hedgerow thorns, and take away
 An odor up the lane to last all day,—
 If breathing now, unsweetened would forgo thee.

III

The sun that used to smite thee,
 And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn
 Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower to burn,—
 If shining now, with not a hue would light thee.

IV

The dew that used to wet thee,
 And, white first, grow incarnadined because
 It lay upon thee where the crimson was,—
 If dropping now, would darken where it met thee.

V

The fly that 'lit upon thee
 To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet
 Along thy leaf's pure edges after heat,—
 If 'lighting now, would coldly overrun thee.

VI

The bee that once did suck thee,
 And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,
 And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,—
 If passing now, would blindly overlook thee.

VII

The heart doth recognize thee,
 Alone, alone! the heart doth smell thee sweet,
 Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete,
 Perceiving all those changes that disguise thee.

VIII

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
 More love, dead rose, than to any roses bold
 Which Julia wears at dances, smiling cold:—
 Lie still upon this heart which breaks below thee!

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS

I

She has laughed as softly as if she sighed,
 She has counted six, and over,
 Of a purse well filled and a heart well tried—
 Oh, each a worthy lover!
 They 'give her time;' for her soul must slip
 Where the world has set the grooving;
 She will lie to none with her fair red lip:
 But love seeks truer loving.

II

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,
 As her thoughts were beyond recalling,
 With a glance for *one*, and a glance for *some*,
 From her eyelids rising and falling;
 Speaks common words with a blushful air,
 Hears bold words, unrepining;
 But her silence says—what she never will swear—
 And love seeks better loving.

III

Go, lady, lean to the night-guitar
 And drop a smile to the bringer;
 Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
 At the voice of an in-door singer.
 Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes;
 Glance lightly, on their removing;
 And join new vows to old perjuries—
 But dare not call it loving.

IV

Unless you can think, when the song is done,
 No other is soft in the rhythm;
 Unless you can feel, when left by One,
 That all men else go with him;
 Unless you can know, when unpraised by his breath,
 That your beauty itself wants proving;
 Unless you can swear 'For life, for death!'
 Oh, fear to call it loving!

V

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day
 On the absent face that fixed you;
 Unless you can love, as the angels may,
 With the breadth of heaven betwixt you;
 Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
 Through behaving and unbehaving;
 Unless you can *die* when the dream is past—
 Oh, never call it loving!

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS

I

Love me, Sweet, with all thou art,
 Feeling, thinking, seeing;
 Love me in the lightest part,
 Love me in full being.

II

Love me with thine open youth
 In its frank surrender;
 With the vowing of thy mouth,
 With its silence tender.

III

Love me with thine azure eyes,
 Made for earnest granting;
 Taking color from the skies,
 Can Heaven's truth be wanting?

IV

Love me with their lids, that fall
 Snow-like at first meeting;
 Love me with thine heart, that all
 Neighbors then see beating.

V

Love me with thine hand stretched out
 Freely—open-minded:
 Love me with thy loitering foot,—
 Hearing one behind it.

VI

Love me with thy voice, that turns
 Sudden faint above me;
 Love me with thy blush that burns
 When I murmur *Love me!*

VII

Love me with thy thinking soul,
 Break it to love-sighing;
 Love me with thy thoughts that roll
 On through living—dying.

VIII

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
 When the world has crowned thee;
 Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
 With the angels round thee.

IX

Love me pure, as musers do,
 Up the woodlands shady:
 Love me gaily, fast and true,
 As a winsome lady.

X

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
 Farther off or nigher,
 Love me for the house and grave,
 And for something higher.

XI

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, Dear,
 Woman's love no fable,
 I will love *thee*—half a year—
 As a man is able.

A YEAR'S SPINNING

I

He listened at the porch that day,
 To hear the wheel go on, and on;
 And then it stopped, ran back away,
 While through the door he brought the sun:
 But now my spinning is all done.

II

He sat beside me, with an oath
 That love ne'er ended, once begun;
 I smiled—believing for us both,
 What was the truth for only one:
 And now my spinning is all done.

III

My mother cursed me that I heard
 A young man's wooing as I spun:
 Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,—
 For I have, since, a harder known!
 And now my spinning is all done.

IV

I thought—O God!—my first-born's cry
 Both voices to mine ear would drown:
 I listened in mine agony—
 It was the *silence* made me groan!
 And now my spinning is all done.

V

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,
 (Who cursed me on her death-bed lone)
 And my dead baby's (God it save!)
 Who, not to bless me, would not moan.
 And now my spinning is all done.

VI

A stone upon my heart and head,
 But no name written on the stone!
 Sweet neighbors, whisper low instead,
 'This sinner was a loving one—
 And now her spinning is all done.'

VII

And let the door ajar remain,
 In case he should pass by anon;
 And leave the wheel out very plain,—
 That HE, when passing in the sun,
 May see the spinning is all done.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE

I

Five months ago the stream did flow,
 The lilies bloomed within the sedge,
 And we were lingering to and fro,
 Where none will track thee in this snow,
 Along the stream, beside the hedge.
 Ah, Sweet, be free to love and go!
 For if I do not hear thy foot,
 The frozen river is as mute,
 The flowers have dried down to the root:
 And why, since these be changed since May,
 Shouldst *thou* change less than *they*?

II

And slow, slow as the winter snow
 The tears have drifted to mine eyes;
 And my poor cheeks, five months ago
 Set blushing at thy praises so,
 Put paleness on for a disguise.
 Ah, Sweet, be free to praise and go!
 For if my face is turned too pale,
 It was thine oath that first did fail,—
 It was thy love proved false and frail,—
 And why, since these be changed enow,
 Should *I* change less than *thou*?

A REED

I

I am no trumpet, but a reed;
 No flattering breath shall from me lead
 A silver sound, a hollow sound:

I will not ring, for priest or king,
 One blast that in re-echoing
 Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

II

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
 A broken reed, the wind indeed
 Left flat upon a dismal shore;
 Yet if a little maid or child
 Should sigh within it, earnest-mild
 This reed will answer evermore.

III

I am no trumpet, but a reed;
 Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
 Their nets along the river's edge,
 I will not tear their nets at all,
 Nor pierce their hands, if they should fall:
 Then let them leave me in the sedge.

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE

A. A. E. C.

BORN JULY, 1848. DIED NOVEMBER, 1849

Of English blood, of Tuscan birth,
 What country should we give her?
 Instead of any on the earth,
 The civic Heavens receive her.

And here among the English tombs
 In Tuscan ground we lay her,
 While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
 Our English words of prayer.

A little child!—how long she lived,
 By months, not years, is reckoned:
 Born in one July, she survived
 Alone to see a second.

Bright-featured, as the July sun
 Her little face still played in,
 And splendors, with her birth begun,
 Had had no time for fading.

So, LILY, from those July hours,
 No wonder we should call her;
 She looked such kinship to the flowers,—
 Was but a little taller.

A Tuscan Lily,—only white,
 As Dante, in abhorrence
 Of red corruption, wished aright
 The lilies of his Florence.

We could not wish her whiter,—her
 Who perfumed with pure blossom
 The house—a lovely thing to wear
 Upon a mother's bosom!

This July creature thought perhaps
 Our speech not worth assuming;
 She sat upon her parents' laps
 And mimicked the gnat's humming;

Said 'father,' 'mother'—then left off,
 For tongues celestial, fitter:
 Her hair had grown just long enough
 To catch heaven's jasper-glitter.

Babes! Love could always hear and see
 Behind the cloud that hid them.
 'Let little children come to Me,
 And do not thou forbid them.'

So, unforbidding, have we met,
 And gently here have laid her,
 Though winter is no time to get
 The flowers that should o'erspread her:

We should bring pansies quick with spring,
 Rose, violet, daffodilly,
 And also, above everything,
 White lilies for our Lily.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave exacts,—
 Glad, grateful attestations
 Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,
 With calm renunciations.

Her very mother with light feet
 Should leave the place too earthy,
 Saying 'The angels have thee, Sweet,
 Because we are not worthy.'

But winter kills the orange-buds,
 The gardens in the frost are,
 And all the heart dissolves in floods,
 Remembering we have lost her.

Poor earth, poor heart,—too weak, too weak
 To miss the July shining!
 Poor heart!—what bitter words we speak
 When God speaks of resigning!

Sustain this heart in us that faints,
 Thou God, the self-existent!
 We catch up wild at parting saints
 And feel thy heaven too distant.

The wind that swept them out of sin
 Has ruffled all our vesture:
 On the shut door that let them in
 We beat with frantic gesture,—

To us, us also, open straight!
 The outer life is chilly;
 Are *we* too, like the earth, to wait
 Till next year for our Lily?

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
 My leaping, dimpled treasure,
 At every word I write like these,
 Clapsed close with stronger pressure!

Too well my own heart understands,—
 At every word beats fuller—
 My little feet, my little hands,
 And hair of Lily's color!

But God gives patience, Love learns strength,
 And Faith remembers promise,
 And Hope itself can smile at length
 On other hopes gone from us.

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer Death,
 Through struggle made more glorious:
 This mother stills her sobbing breath,
 Renouncing yet victorious.

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts
 With spirit unbereaven,—
 'God will not all take back his gifts;
 My Lily's mine in heaven.

'Still mine! maternal rights serene
 Not given to another!
 The crystal bars shine faint between
 The souls of child and mother.

'Meanwhile,' the mother cries, 'content!
 Our love was well divided:
 Its sweetness following where she went,
 Its anguish stayed where I did.

'Well done of God, to halve the lot,
 And give her all the sweetness;
 To us, the empty room and cot,—
 To her, the Heaven's completeness.

'To us, this grave,—to her, the rows
 The mystic palm-trees spring in;
 To us, the silence in the house,—
 To her, the choral singing.

'For her, to gladden in God's view,—
 For us, to hope and bear on.
 Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
 Beside the Rose of Sharon!

'Grow fast in heaven, sweet Lily clipped,
 In love more calm than this is,
 And may the angels dewy-lipped
 Remind thee of our kisses!

'While none shall tell thee of our tears,
 These human tears now falling,
 Till, after a few patient years,
 One home shall take us all in.

'Child, father, mother—who, left out?
 Not mother, and not father!
 And when, our dying couch about,
 The natural mists shall gather,

'Some smiling angel close shall stand
 In old Correggio's fashion,
 And bear a LILY in his hand,
 For death's ANNUNCIATION.'

LIFE AND LOVE

I

Fast this Life of mine was dying,
 Blind already and calm as death,
 Snowflakes on her bosom lying
 Scarcely heaving with her breath.

II

Love came by, and having known her
 In a dream of fabled lands,
 Gently stooped, and laid upon her
 Mystic chrism of holy hands;

III

Drew his smile across her folded
 Eyelids, as the swallow dips;
 Breathed as finely as the cold did
 Through the locking of her lips.

IV

So, when Life looked upward, being
 Warmed and breathed on from above,
 What sight could she have for seeing,
 Evermore . . . but only Love?

A DENIAL

I

We have met late—it is too late to meet,
 O friend, not more than friend!
 Death's forecome shroud is tangled round my feet,
 And if I step or stir, I touch the end.
 In this last jeopardy

Can I approach thee, I, who cannot move?
 How shall I answer thy request for love?
 Look in my face and see.

II

I love thee not, I dare not love thee! go
 In silence; drop my hand.
 If thou seek roses, seek them where they blow
 In garden-alleys, not in desert-sand.
 Can life and death agree,
 That thou shouldst stoop thy song to my complaint?
 I cannot love thee. If the word is faint,
 Look in my face and see.

III

I might have loved thee in some former days.
 Oh, then, my spirits had leapt
 As now they sink, at hearing thy love-praise!
 Before these faded cheeks were overwept,
 Had this been asked of me,
 To love thee with my whole strong heart and head,—
 I should have said still . . . yes, but *smiled* and said
 ‘Look in my face and see!’

IV

But now . . . God sees me, God, who took my heart
 And drowned it in life's surge.
 In all your wide warm earth I have no part—
 A light song overcomes me like a dirge.
 Could Love's great harmony
 The saints keep step to when their bonds are loose,
 Not weigh me down? am I a wife to choose?
 Look in my face and see—

V

While I behold, as plain as one who dreams,
 Some woman of full worth,
 Whose voice, as cadenced as a silver stream's,

Shall prove the fountain-soul which sends it forth;
 One younger, more thought-free
 And fair and gay, than I, thou must forget,
 With brighter eyes than these . . . which are not wet . . .
 Look in my face and see!

VI

So farewell thou, whom I have known too late
 To let thee come so near.
 Be counted happy while men call thee great,
 And one belovèd woman feels thee dear!—
 Not I!—that cannot be.
 I am lost, I am changed,—I must go farther, where
 The change shall take me worse, and no one dare
 Look in my face and see.

VII

Meantime I bless thee. By these thoughts of mine
 I bless thee from all such!
 I bless thy lamp to oil, thy cup to wine,
 Thy hearth to joy, thy hand to an equal touch
 Of loyal troth. For me,
 I love thee not, I love thee not!—away!
 Here 's no more courage in my soul to say
 'Look in my face and see.'

PROOF AND DISPROOF

I

Dost thou love me, my Belovèd?
 Who shall answer yes or no?
 What is provèd or disprovèd
 When my soul inquireth so,
 Dost thou love me, my Belovèd?

II

I have seen thy heart to-day,
 Never open to the crowd,
 While to love me aye and aye
 Was the vow as it was vowed
 By thine eyes of steadfast gray.

III

Now I sit alone, alone—
 And the hot tears break and burn,
 Now, Belovèd, thou art gone,
 Doubt and terror have their turn.
 Is it love that I have known?

IV

I have known some bitter things,—
 Anguish, anger, solitude.
 Year by year an evil brings,
 Year by year denies a good;
 March winds violate my springs.

V

I have known how sickness bends,
 I have known how sorrow breaks,—
 How quick hopes have sudden ends,
 How the heart thinks till it aches
 Of the smile of buried friends.

VI

Last, I have known *thee*, my brave
 Noble thinker, lover, doer!
 The best knowledge last I have.
 But thou comest as the thrower
 Of fresh flowers upon a grave.

VII

Count what feelings used to move me!
 Can this love assort with those?
 Thou, who art so far above me,
 Wilt thou stoop so, for repose?
 Is it true that thou canst love me?

VIII

Do not blame me if I doubt thee.
 I can call love by its name
 When thine arm is wrapt about me;
 But even love seems not the same,
 When I sit alone, without thee.

IX

In thy clear eyes I descried
 Many a proof of love, to-day;
 But to-night, those unbelied
 Speechful eyes being gone away,
 There 's the proof to seek, beside.

X

Dost thou love me, my Belovèd?
 Only *thou* canst answer yes!
 And, thou gone, the proof 's disprovèd,
 And the cry rings answerless—
 Dost thou love me, my Belovèd?

QUESTION AND ANSWER

I

Love you seek for, presupposes
 Summer heat and sunny glow.
 Tell me, do you find moss-roses
 Budding, blooming in the snow?

Snow might kill the rose-tree's root—
 Shake it quickly from your foot,
 Lest it harm you as you go.

II

From the ivy where it dapples
 A gray ruin, stone by stone,
 Do you look for grapes or apples,
 Or for sad green leaves alone?
 Pluck the leaves off, two or three—
 Keep them for morality
 When you shall be safe and gone.

INCLUSIONS

I

Oh, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to lie along in thine
 As a little stone in a running stream, it seems to lie and pine
 Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, unfit to plight with thine

II

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear, drawn closer to thine own
 My cheek is white, my cheek is worn, by many a tear run down
 Now leave a little space, Dear, lest it should wet thine own

III

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, commingled with thine
 soul?—
 Red grows the cheek, and warm the hand; the part is in the
 whole:
 Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate, when soul is joined
 soul.

INSUFFICIENCY

I

There is no one beside thee and no one above thee,
Thou standest alone as the nightingale sings!
And my words that would praise thee are impotent
things,
For none can express thee though all should approve
thee.
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can love thee.

II

Say, what can I do for thee? weary thee, grieve thee?
Lean on thy shoulder, new burdens to add?
Weep my tears over thee, making thee sad?
Oh, hold me not—love me not! let me retrieve thee.
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can leave thee.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

I

I thought once how Theocritus had sung
 Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
 Who each one in a gracious hand appears
 To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:
 And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
 I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
 The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
 Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
 A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
 So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
 Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
 And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,—
 'Guess now who holds thee?'—'Death,' I said. But, there,
 The silver answer rang,—'Not Death, but Love.'

II

But only three in all God's universe
 Have heard this word thou hast said,—Himself, beside
 Thee speaking, and me listening! and replied
 One of us . . . *that* was God, . . . and laid the curse
 So darkly on my eyelids, as to amerce
 My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
 The deathweights, placed there, would have signified
 Less absolute exclusion. 'Nay' is worse
 From God than from all others, O my friend!
 Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
 Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend;
 Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars:
 And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
 We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
 Unlike our uses and our destinies.
 Our ministering two angels look surprise

On one another, as they strike athwart
 Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
 A guest for queens to social pageantries,
 With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
 Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part
 Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
 With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
 A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through
 The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
 The chrism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
 And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV

Thou hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
 Most gracious singer of high poems! where
 The dancers will break footing, from the care
 Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
 And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
 For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
 To let thy music drop here unaware
 In folds of golden fulness at my door?
 Look up and see the casement broken in,
 The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
 My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
 Hush, call no echo up in further proof
 Of desolation! there 's a voice within
 That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . . alone, aloof.

V

I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,
 As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
 And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
 The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
 What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
 And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
 Through the ashen grayness. If thy foot in scorn
 Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
 It might be well perhaps. But if instead

Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
 The gray dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
 O my Belovèd, will not shield thee so,
 That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
 The hair beneath. Stand farther off then! go.

VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
 Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
 Alone upon the threshold of my door
 Of individual life, I shall command
 The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
 Serenely in the sunshine as before,
 Without the sense of that which I forbore—
 Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
 Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
 With pulses that beat double. What I do
 And what I dream include thee, as the wine
 Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
 God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
 And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

VII

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
 Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
 Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
 Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
 Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
 Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
 Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
 God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
 And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
 The names of country, heaven, are changed away
 For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
 And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved yesterday,
 (The singing angels know) are only dear
 Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII

What can I give thee back, O liberal
 And princely giver, who hast brought the gold
 And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
 And laid them on the outside of the wall
 For such as I to take or leave withal,
 In unexpected largesse? am I cold,
 Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
 High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
 Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.
 Ask God who knows. For frequent tears have run
 The colors from my life, and left so dead
 And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
 To give the same as pillow to thy head.
 Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

IX

Can it be right to give what I can give?
 To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
 As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
 Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
 Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
 For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
 That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
 So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve,
 That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
 Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
 I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
 Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
 Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.
 Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X

Yet, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
 And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
 Let temple burn, or flax; an equal light
 Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed:

And love is fire. And when I say at need
I love thee . . . mark! . . . I love thee—in thy sight
 I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
 With conscience of the new rays that proceed
 Out of my face toward thine. There 's nothing low
 In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
 Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
 And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
 Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
 How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI

And therefore if to love can be desert,
 I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
 As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
 To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—
 This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
 To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
 To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
 A melancholy music,—why advert
 To these things? O Belovèd, it is plain
 I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!
 And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
 From that same love this vindicating grace,
 To live on still in love, and yet in vain,—
 To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII

Indeed this very love which is my boast,
 And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
 Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
 To draw men's eyes and prove the inner cost,—
 This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
 I should not love withal, unless that thou
 Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
 When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed,
 And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak

Of love even, as a good thing of my own:
 Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
 And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
 And that I love (O soul, we must be meek!)
 Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII

And wilt thou have me fashion into speech
 The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
 And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
 Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
 I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
 My hand to hold my spirit so far off
 From myself—me—that I should bring thee proof
 In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
 Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
 Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
 Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
 And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
 By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
 Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
 Except for love's sake only. Do not say
 'I love her for her smile—her look—her way
 Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
 That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'—
 For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
 Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
 May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
 A creature might forget to weep, who bore
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
 But love me for love's sake, that evermore
 Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

XV

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear
 Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
 For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
 With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
 On me thou lookest with no doubting care,
 As on a bee shut in a crystalline;
 Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,
 And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
 Were most impossible failure, if I strove
 To fail so. But I look on thee—on thee—
 Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
 Hearing oblivion beyond memory;
 As one who sits and gazes from above,
 Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI

And yet, because thou overcomest so,
 Because thou art more noble and like a king,
 Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
 Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
 Too close against thine heart henceforth to know
 How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
 May prove as lordly and complete a thing
 In lifting upward, as in crushing low!
 And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
 To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
 Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,
 Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me forth,
 I rise above abasement at the word.
 Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVII

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
 God set between his After and Before,
 And strike up and strike off the general roar
 Of the rushing worlds a melody that floats

In a serene air purely. Antidotes
 Of medicated music, answering for
 Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
 From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
 Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.
 How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
 A hope, to sing by gladly? or a fine
 Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
 A shade, in which to sing—of palm or pine?
 A grave, on which to rest from singing? Choose.

XVIII

I never gave a lock of hair away
 To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
 Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully,
 I ring out to the full brown length and say
 'Take it.' My day of youth went yesterday;
 My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
 Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
 As girls do, any more: it only may
 Now shade on two pale cheeks the mark of tears,
 Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
 Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
 Would take this first, but Love is justified,—
 Take it thou,—finding pure, from all those years,
 The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX

The soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
 I barter curl for curl upon that mart,
 And from my poet's forehead to my heart
 Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,—
 As purple black, as erst to Pindar's eyes
 The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart
 The nine white Muse-brows. For this counterpart, . . .
 The bay-crown's shade, Belovèd, I surmise,
 Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!

Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
 I tie the shadows safe from gliding back,
 And lay the gift where nothing hindereth;
 Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to lack
 No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX

Beloved, my Belovèd, when I think
 That thou wast in the world a year ago,
 What time I sat alone here in the snow
 And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
 No moment at thy voice, but, link by link,
 Went counting all my chains as if that so
 They never could fall off at any blow
 Struck by thy possible hand,—why, thus I drink
 Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,
 Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
 With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
 Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
 Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
 Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI

Say over again, and yet once over again,
 That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
 Should seem 'a cuckoo-song,' as thou dost treat it,
 Remember, never to the hill or plain,
 Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
 Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
 Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted
 By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
 Cry, 'Speak once more—thou lovest!' Who can fear
 Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
 Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
 Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
 The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
 To love me also in silence with thy soul.

XXII

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
 Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
 Until the lengthening wings break into fire
 At either curvèd point,—what bitter wrong
 Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
 Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
 The angels would press on us and aspire
 To drop some golden orb of perfect song
 Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
 Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
 Contrarious moods of men recoil away
 And isolate pure spirits, and permit
 A place to stand and love in for a day,
 With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
 Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?
 And would the sun for thee more coldly shine
 Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
 I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read
 Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
 But . . . so much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
 While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
 Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.
 Then, love me, Lovel! look on me—breathe on me!
 As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
 For love, to give up acres and degree,
 I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
 My near sweet view of Heaven, for earth with thee!

XXIV

Let the world's sharpness, like a clasping knife,
 Shut in upon itself and do no harm
 In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm,
 And let us hear no sound of human strife

After the click of the shutting. Life to life—
 I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
 And feel as safe as guarded by a charm
 Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife
 Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
 The lilies of our lives may reassure
 Their blossoms from their roots, accessible
 Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer,
 Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
 God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV

A heavy heart, Belovèd, have I borne
 From year to year until I saw thy face,
 And sorrow after sorrow took the place
 Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
 As the stringed pearls, each lifted in its turn
 By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace
 Were changed to long despairs, till God's own grace
 Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
 My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me bring
 And let it drop adown thy calmly great
 Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
 Which its own nature doth precipitate,
 While thine doth close above it, mediating
 Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI

I lived with visions for my company
 Instead of men and women, years ago,
 And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
 A sweeter music than they played to me.
 But soon their trailing purple was not free
 Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,
 And I myself grew faint and blind below
 Their vanishing eyes. Then *THOU* didst come—to be,
 Belovèd, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,

Their songs, their splendors (better, yet the same,
 As river-water hallowed into fonts),
 Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
 My soul with satisfaction of all wants:
 Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

XXVII

My own Belovèd, who hast lifted me
 From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
 And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
 A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
 Shines out again, as all the angels see,
 Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
 Who camest to me when the world was gone,
 And I who looked for only God, found *thee!*
 I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.
 As one who stands in dewless asphodel
 Looks backward on the tedious time he had
 In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,
 Make witness, here, between the good and bad,
 That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII

My letters! all dead paper, mute and white!
 And yet they seem alive and quivering
 Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
 And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
 This said,—he wished to have me in his sight
 Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
 To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
 Yet I wept for it!—this, . . . the paper's light . . .
 Said, *Dear, I love thee*; and I sank and quailed
 As if God's future thundered on my past.
 This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
 With lying at my heart that beat too fast.
 And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed
 If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX

I think of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
 About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
 Put out broad leaves, and soon there 's nought to see
 Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
 Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
 I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
 Who art dearer, better! Rather, instantly
 Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,
 Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
 And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee
 Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered, everywhere!
 Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
 And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
 I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX

I see thine image through my tears to-night,
 And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
 Refer the cause?—Belovèd, is it thou
 Or I, who makes me sad? The acolyte
 Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite
 May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
 On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow,
 Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of sight,
 As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's Amen.
 Belovèd, dost thou love? or did I see all
 The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
 Too vehement light dilated my ideal,
 For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again,
 As now these tears come—falling hot and real?

XXXI

Thou comest! all is said without a word.
 I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
 In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble through
 Their happy eyelids from an unaverred

Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred
 In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
 The sin most, but the occasion—that we two
 Should for a moment stand unministered
 By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,
 Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears would rise,
 With thy broad heart serenely interpose:
 Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
 These thoughts which tremble when bereft of those,
 Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII

The first time that the sun rose on thine oath
 To love me, I looked forward to the moon
 To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
 And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
 Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe;
 And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
 For such man's love!—more like an out-of-tune
 Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
 To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
 Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
 I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
 A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may float
 'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
 And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
 The name I used to run at, when a child,
 From innocent play, and leave the cowslips piled,
 To glance up in some face that proved me dear
 With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
 Fond voices which, being drawn and reconciled
 Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
 Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
 While I call God—call God!—So let thy mouth
 Be heir to those who are now exanimate.

Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
 And catch the early love up in the late.
 Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
 With the same heart, will answer and not wait.

XXXIV

With the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee
 As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
 Lo, the vain promise! is the same, the same,
 Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?
 When called before, I told how hastily
 I dropped my flowers or brake off from a game,
 To run and answer with the smile that came
 At play last moment, and went on with me
 Through my obedience. When I answer now,
 I drop a grave thought, break from solitude;
 Yet still my heart goes to thee—ponder how—
 Not as to a single good, but all my good!
 Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
 That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
 And be all to me? Shall I never miss
 Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
 That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
 When I look up, to drop on a new range
 Of walls and floors, another home than this?
 Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
 Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
 That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,
 To conquer grief, tries more, as all things prove;
 For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
 Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.
 Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
 And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI

When we met first and loved, I did not build
 Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
 To last, a love set pendulous between
 Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
 Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
 The onward path, and feared to overlean
 A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
 And strong since then, I think that God has willed
 A still renewable fear . . . O love, O troth . . .
 Lest these enclaspèd hands should never hold,
 This mutual kiss drop down between us both
 As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.
 And Love, be false if *he*, to keep one oath,
 Must lose one joy, by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII

Pardon, oh, pardon, that my soul should make,
 Of all that strong divineness which I know
 For thine and thee, an image only so
 Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
 It is that distant years which did not take
 Thy sovrantry, recoiling with a blow,
 Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
 Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
 Thy purity of likeness and distort
 Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit:
 As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
 His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
 Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort
 And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII

First time he kissed me, he but only kissed
 The fingers of this hand wherewith I write;
 And ever since, it grew more clean and white,
 Slow to world-greetings, quick with its 'Oh, list,'

When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
 I could not wear here, plainer to my sight,
 Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
 The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed,
 Half falling on the hair. O beyond need!
 That was the chrism of love, which love's own crown,
 With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
 The third upon my lips was folded down
 In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,
 I have been proud and said, 'My love, my own.'

XXXIX

Because thou hast the power and own'st the grace
 To look through and behind this mask of me
 (Against which years have beat thus blanchingly
 With their rains), and behold my soul's true face,
 The dim and weary witness of life's race,—
 Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
 Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
 The patient angel waiting for a place
 In the new Heavens,—because nor sin nor woe,
 Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighborhood,
 Nor all which others viewing, turn to go,
 Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed,—
 Nothing repels thee, . . . Dearest, teach me so
 To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good!

XL

Oh, yes! they love through all this world of ours!
 I will not gainsay love, called love forsooth.
 I have heard love talked in my early youth,
 And since, not so long back but that the flowers
 Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans and Giaours
 Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth
 For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth
 Slips on the nut if, after frequent showers,
 The shell is over-smooth,—and not so much
 Will turn the thing called love, aside to hate

Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
 A lover, my Belovèd! thou canst wait
 Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to touch,
 And think it soon when others cry "Too late."

XLI

I thank all who have loved me in their hearts,
 With thanks and love from mine. Deep thanks to all
 Who paused a little near the prison-wall
 To hear my music in its louder parts
 Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's
 Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
 But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall
 When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
 Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot
 To hearken what I said between my tears, . . .
 Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh, to shoot
 My soul's full meaning into future years,
 That *they* should lend it utterance, and salute
 Love that endures, from Life that disappears!

XLII

'My future will not copy fair my past'—
 I wrote that once; and thinking at my side
 My ministering life-angel justified
 The word by his appealing look upcast
 To the white throne of God, I turned at last,
 And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied
 To angels in thy soul! Then I, long tried
 By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
 While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff
 Gave out green leaves with morning dews impearled.
 I seek no copy now of life's first half:
 Leave here the pages with long musing curled,
 And write me new my future's epigraph,
 New angel mine, unhopèd for in the world!

XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of everyday's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
 I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
 I love thee with the passion put to use
 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV

Belovèd, thou hast brought me many flowers
 Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
 And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
 In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
 So, in the like name of that love of ours,
 Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
 And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
 From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers
 Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
 And wait thy weeding; yet here 's eglantine,
 Here 's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
 Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine.
 Instruct thine eyes to keep their colors true,
 And tell thy soul their roots are left in mine.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE AND OTHER POEMS

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

"I love your verses with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett," Robert Browning wrote in his first letter to Elizabeth Barrett, after he read her 1844 volume of poems. Letters gave way to visits, and the literary friendship soon blossomed into one of the world's most famous courtships. It was during this courtship that Elizabeth Barrett, in her invalid's room on Wimpole Street, composed most of the love lyrics in her celebrated sonnet sequence, SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE. She did not show them to Robert Browning until several months after their elopement, when one day she suddenly thrust the manuscript into his hand. Browning persuaded her to have them privately printed in 1847 and to include them in her 1850 *Poems*, for, he said, "I dared not reserve to myself the finest sonnets written in any language since Shakespeare." In the 1850 collection the poems first appeared under the title, SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE. The title was a happy afterthought, an effort to disguise the intimacy of the poems by the fiction that they were translations; but "the Portuguese" was actually a personal allusion to a pet name of Browning for his wife.

A DOLPHIN BOOK

Cover design by George Glusti

Cover drawing by Elizabeth Skilton